

CREATING HOME

A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children

Kindergarten-1st Grade



BY JESSICA YORK AND CHRISTY OLSON

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THE PROGRAM

We see in the world around us many symbols that teach us the meaning of life. You could notice if you wanted to, but you are usually too busy. We Indians live in a world of symbols and images where the spiritual and the commonplace are one. — John Fire/Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes

You are about to take a journey. It is a journey you take alone and in community — a journey of inward reflections and outward actions of faith. A Unitarian Universalist journey, open to stories and beliefs from different lands and people. It is a journey from home. It is a journey to home. Welcome home.

This program helps children develop a sense of home that is grounded in faith. Together with your group you will ask questions about the purpose of having a home and the functions a home serves, for us as humans and for other animals. The program speaks of home as a place of belonging and explores the roles each of us play in the homes where we live. The program introduces the concept of a "faith home" — your congregation — which shares some characteristics with a family home. Like a family home, a faith home offers its members certain joys, protections, and responsibilities.

Creating Home is not about the outward appearance and material worth of our homes. In these sessions, children explore the deep sense of sacredness, the beauty of hospitality, and the gift of loving relationships that a home can represent. As participants actively explore the concept of home, they create a community home in your meeting space. Watch for small differences in children's respect for one another and their engagement with the wider congregation as they learn to identify their Unitarian Universalist congregation as a home.

The sessions include stories from Unitarian Universalist and other traditions, hands-on activities to make learning accessible to individuals with various learning styles, and structured opportunities for questioning, reflecting, and self-expression. The program introduces children to Unitarian Universalist heritage, including rituals, songs, and traditions of our faith, and stories about Unitarian Universalists whose words, songs, and deeds have helped to shape the faith home that participants share.

Within this program, you will find the terms "family home," "faith home," and "classroom home." Family home refers to the place where a child lives and the people with whom the child lives and/or the people a child considers part of his/her family.

Allow participants to self-define their family homes. You may find various configurations of family among the children in your group. Affirming all families and, by extension, all of their members is an explicit goal of this program. Studies show that children who accept and feel good about themselves are likely to accept and feel good about people who are different from them. As a leader, modeling respect for each child's family structure will help everyone in the program learn to identify elements of family life that are common, if not universal, and accept families that are different from their own.

In presenting your Unitarian Universalist congregation as children's faith home, Creating Home draws parallels between what happens in families and what happens in congregations. As in a family home, members of a faith home together create the type of home they want. As in a family home, members who are invisible, uninvolved, or inactive co-create the culture of their faith home by their absence. By guiding and encouraging children to be intentional in how they shape their faith home, you will help to foster adults with a strong sense of stewardship in their congregations.

Each session of this program includes spiritual activities such as chalice-lighting, exploration of a labyrinth, and structured ways for participants to practice rituals such as hospitality and saying grace. Most young children love ritual, and the use of ritual in the sessions mirrors the use of ritual in family homes, in faith homes, in the wider Unitarian Universalist community, and beyond. These spiritual activities form an important element of the program. They familiarize children with specific practices which their families or your congregation may continue after the life of this program, and they provide a common experience for the group. Practicing rituals together builds community and reminds children of their connections to something deeper and more significant than their own experiences, wants, and needs.

Many activities in this program involve stories about and observations in the natural world. Explorations of nature offer young children an accessible connection to the spiritual. Experiences in nature also stimulate children's discovery of the purposes and functions of a home. You will also find stories from the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions; familiar wisdom tales; and new stories, some of them about Unitarian Universalist heroes. You will find fun activities, humor, and new ways to play.

GOALS

Creating Home will:

- Guide participants to identify the characteristics of a home and the functions a home serves
- Help participants articulate and affirm the location and the members of their individual family homes
- Provide opportunities for participants to observe homes in nature and investigate how different kinds of animal homes provide security and sustenance for their inhabitants
- Build participants' vocabulary of faith and religious language
- Draw connections between participants' family home experiences and the roles, responsibilities, and rewards of belonging to a "faith home"
- Help develop participants' sense of belonging in their Creating Home group and in the larger congregation
- Introduce practices from Unitarian Universalist heritage – such as the spiritual rituals of hospitality, saying grace, lighting a chalice, and sharing stories – and invite participants and their families to consider using these on their own
- Provide multiple opportunities for participants to practice artistic self-expression and have fun.

LEADERS

A team of two or more adults should lead the Creating Home program. Having two leaders present at all times helps assure child safety. While one leader implements an activity, the other can focus on classroom management. Ideally, co-leaders will be individuals who consider the congregation their own faith home. At the very least, leaders must feel comfortable with the notion and desirability of a faith home. Several sessions call for the group to participate in the life of the congregation, for example, by participating in worship or in an outreach program. Your leadership must include at least one congregational member who is familiar with the rituals of the congregation.

PARTICIPANTS

The Creating Home program is designed for use with children in kindergarten and first grade. You may find it useful to think about the developmental norms for this age group. Not all children arrive at each developmental stage at the same time, but knowing what to expect overall can be quite helpful, especially to first-time leaders of programs for five- and six-year-olds. In her book [*Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook*](#) (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005), Tracey L. Hurd discusses developmental

characteristics of young school-age children (ages five through seven). Here is a sampling. Five- and six-year-old children are generally able to:

- Coordinate gross motor skills through sports and games
- Draw, write, and use tools with beginning skill
- Think about more than one thing at a time; show the start of logical thinking
- Enjoy pretend play, but are learning to distinguish fantasy from reality
- Show interest in facts, numbers, letters, and words
- Learn rules, authority, and routines; may try to apply rules across different settings, such as using school rules at home
- Enjoy being correct, may apply rules too broadly or literally
- Use self as a reference point
- Learn through social interaction as well as through their individual actions
- Make rigid and/or binary statements about gender and racial identifications
- Are receptive to antiracist intervention and multicultural experiences
- Form first reciprocal friendships
- Develop increased altruism
- Are evolving from fascination with stories of wonder to a keen interest in learning and performing the concrete expressions of religion
- Start developing a sense of belonging to a faith community through the imitation of practices of adults by whom they feel accepted.

Hurd offers a variety of strategies that speak to these developmental considerations and may help you shape your sessions effectively for this age group. Some of these include:

- Provide outlets for physical activity, room for movement during quiet activities, new physical challenges in games
- Include small-motor challenges, such as drawing, writing, painting, or using tools such as scissors
- Create and sustain routines, to give children a sense of control and opportunities to be "correct"

- Notice and talk about children's similarities and differences
- Present complexities that help push children's thinking beyond simple dualisms; gently challenge children's natural moral rigidities
- Provide opportunities for group work and group problem-solving
- Respect children's desire to categorize
- Support children in their beginning friendships, to help them build an emotional base for future relationships
- Welcome the whole child and respect the child as an individual, a member of the religious education group, and a member of the faith community
- Provide encouragement and love.

INTEGRATING ALL PARTICIPANTS

By adapting activities or using alternate activities, you can help ensure that every session is inclusive of children with a range of physical and cognitive abilities and learning styles, food allergies, and other sensitivities or limitations. Below, you will find general guidance on adapting the activities along with some resources for implementing inclusion. Within the sessions, some activities suggest specific adaptations under the heading Including All Participants.

As you plan your Creating Home sessions, be aware of activities that might pose difficulties for children who are differently abled. All spaces, indoor and outdoor, need to be accessible to anyone who might be in the group. Check the width of doorways and aisles, the height of tables, and the terrain of outdoor landscapes.

Find out about participants' medical conditions and their allergies, particularly to food (Session 3 offers a Honey Parfait activity). Make sure all of the children can eat the ingredients you plan to use, or adjust the recipe.

Each session mixes active and quiet, expressive and listening, and whole-group and individual activities. There are alternate activities to substitute for core activities if you feel they better suit a group. Before, during, or after telling a story in this program, you may offer children the [accompanying coloring sheet](#) and some crayons; quietly coloring can keep minds and bodies focused while reinforcing the story's subject matter. As you begin to recognize different learning styles among the participants, let this information guide your planning for each session.

Some activity descriptions mention specific concerns or suggest adaptations under the heading Including All Participants. Feel free to devise your own adaptations to

meet any special needs you perceive. As the leader, you will know best how to provide a fully inclusive learning experience for the group.

On the UUA website, you can read a very helpful resource book, Sally Patton's [Welcoming Children with Special Needs](#).

FAMILIES

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

Each session offers Taking It Home resources including conversation topics and other ways for families to extend the session topics at home; these may include a family game, a family ritual, or links to informative and/or interactive websites. Adapt the Taking It Home section to reflect the activities the group has engaged in and the next stage of the Creating Home journey you have planned. If you have an email address for each family, you may wish to provide Taking It Home as a group email, either before or immediately after the session. Or, you can print, photocopy, and distribute Taking It Home at the session's closing.

Invite families into your sessions. Adult or teen volunteers can be extremely helpful when you implement arts-and-crafts activities. Parents who bring musicianship, storytelling, or artistic skills into your sessions will help foster participants' sense of connection between their family homes and their faith home. The Faith in Action activities for each session offer ideal opportunities to engage parents and other congregants. Find out who can enrich your long-term Faith in Action activities with their personal interests, professional networks, or simply their time.

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

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

All sixteen sessions in Creating Home follow the same structure. Between an opening and a closing ritual, participants engage in up to six activities. The opening includes a chalice-lighting and an experience involving the group's labyrinth. Every session revolves thematically around a central story which participants hear and explore. The stories in this curriculum each include a black-and-white illustration to use as a coloring sheet. Make coloring part of your session. Children can color before a story as a "preview," during a story if a quiet activity promotes their engagement, or afterward to help them recall the story.

Every session offers at least one Faith in Action activity. While these activities are optional, Faith in Action is an important element of the overall Tapestry of Faith curriculum series. Some Faith in Action activities can be completed in one meeting; others are longer term and require the involvement of congregants or community members outside your group.

Most sessions offer alternate activities. Depending on your time and interests, you may choose to replace one or more of the session's core activities with an alternate activity, or add an alternate activity to your session. You may also find the alternative activities useful outside of the program for gatherings such as family retreats, intergenerational dinners, or other events where some interesting programming for children is needed.

As you design your program, decide whether the group needs extra meetings to incorporate additional activities or to complete a long-term Faith in Action project. Long-term Faith in Action projects usually involve meetings outside your regular meeting time and/or at another location. Before you commit to an extended program, make sure you obtain the support of your congregational leadership and the children's families.

In addition to the chalice-lighting suggested for the start of each session, Creating Home introduces rituals centered on a labyrinth. Before the program begins, leaders will create the labyrinth and gather small stones. At the first session, each participant chooses a stone to represent herself/himself at each subsequent session. Placing their stones upon the shared labyrinth represents participants' entrance into the "home" that is your Creating Home session.

Quote

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 the child's level of understanding or experience.

Co-leaders may like to discuss the 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 and explains how you can use the activities to teach the concepts. The introduction also describes the session's thematic connection with the other sessions in the program.

Goals

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

The Learning Objectives section describes specific participant outcomes which the session activities are designed to facilitate. They describe what a participant will learn, become, or be able to do as a result of the learning activities. It may be helpful to think of learning objectives as the building blocks with which Creating Home's larger, "big picture" goals are achieved. If particular learning objectives appeal to you as important, make sure you select the activities for this session that address these outcomes.

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 session Opening through the Closing, plus any Faith in Action activities for the session.

Session-at-a-Glance is a guide for your own planning. From the Session-at-a-Glance table and the alternate activities, you will choose which elements to use and how to combine these to best suit the group, the meeting space, and the amount of time you have.

Keep in mind that many variables inform the actual completion time for an activity. Whole-group discussions will take longer in a large group than in a small group. While six teams can plan their skits as quickly as two teams can, your group will need more time to watch all six skits than to watch two. Remember to consider the

time you will need to relocate participants to another area of your meeting room, and the time you will need if you wish to include clean-up in an art activity.

Note that the estimated times for Faith in Action activities include only the preparation and planning work your group will do when you meet together. For most Faith in Action activities, you will need to make special arrangements for participants, their families, other congregants, and sometimes members of the wider community to undertake activities outside the group's regular meeting time.

Spiritual Preparation

Each session provides a spiritual exercise that teachers may use to prepare themselves for leading 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. 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. Take advantage of these exercises as a way to grow spiritually as a leader.

Session Plan

The session plan presents every element of the session in detail in the sequence established in the Session-at-a-Glance table. Additionally, the session plan presents any alternate activities, a Taking It Home section with extension activities for families, and a Resources section. The Resources section includes all the stories, handouts, and other resources you need to lead all of the session activities. The section also suggests additional sources to help you, the leader, further explore the session topics.

If you are reading Creating Home online, you can move as you wish among a session's elements — Opening, Closing, Faith in Action, Activity 4, Resources, 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'll have a user-friendly document on your computer that you can 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.

Opening: Each session begins with a chalice-lighting ritual. To ensure safety, obtain an LED/battery-operated flaming chalice or use a symbolic chalice. After the first session, participants take their own "name stones" from the group basket and place the stones upon the labyrinth as part of the opening ritual.

The Opening is a time for centering, both for individuals and the group. Also, repeating the opening ritual each session helps participants build a faith language

vocabulary, experience faith ritual, and make associations between ritual and the concepts of "home," "family home," and "faith home." While children in this age group tend to enjoy precise repetition of rituals, you will find suggestions here for altering the opening ritual each time you meet to introduce the session topic. 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 six activities form the core content of each session. They address different learning styles you may find among participants. In each session, one activity focuses the group's attention on a story that illuminates the session theme.

Presenting activities in the sequence suggested will help you provide a coherent learning experience. In general, sessions are structured to first activate children's interest in and prior knowledge of the main topic; next, offer hands-on engagement with the topic; and finally, provide opportunities to process and apply new observations and knowledge. 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 five- and six-year-olds engaged and on track. As you mix and match activities to form a session that will work well for you, keep in mind young participants' journey of learning and the benefits of a well paced session that includes different kinds of activities.

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 mixing Plaster of Paris before participants arrive.

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 experience the active expression of 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. Faith in Action projects usually require special arrangements to be made in advance. Like the core and alternate activities, Faith in Action activities include a materials checklist, a list of preparations you must make ahead of time, and a detailed description of the activity.

Most sessions either introduce a new Faith in Action activity or describe a step the group will take in a long-term Faith in Action activity. However, when you get to a particular session, the group may not be ready for a new Faith in Action activity. Or, you may be "on hold" midway through a long-term Faith in Action project, perhaps waiting for supplies to arrive or for an environmental organization to schedule time to visit your religious education program. It is perfectly fine for the Faith in Action component of Creating Home to deviate from the suggested timetable!

Before your first Creating Home session, decide which Faith in Action activities you will do over the course of the program. As you plan each session, make sure you allocate the time you'll need to move Faith in Action project(s) forward. Sessions that present Faith in Action activities also provide estimates of how much time you will spend completing this particular stage of the project.

Plan well, but remain flexible. Be aware that inclement weather, the last-minute cancellation of a scheduled visitor, or other surprises may bump a planned Faith in Action activity to a later session.

Note: Faith in Action activities can also be used in ways independent of the Creating Home program for a wide age-span of children, or for multi-generational groups.

Closing: Each session includes a closing ritual which includes the return of children's name stones to the group basket from the labyrinth, a structured opportunity for sharing responses to the session, and the extinguishing of the chalice. The Closing signals the end of the group's time together. As you plan each session, allow plenty of time for your Closing. Avoid rushing through it. You may wish to use your Taking It Home handout to describe the sacred intent of opening and

closing rituals and their importance in the Creating Home program.

As with the Opening, repeating the same basic Closing at the end of each session will be both enjoyable and educational for children. Yet, you will find suggestions in each session for tailoring the Closing to the session's topic. Shape a closing ritual that fits the group and your faith home culture and practices.

Leader Reflection and Planning: This section provides guidance, often in the form of questions, 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. These resources may include games, conversation topics, ideas for incorporating Unitarian Universalist rituals into the home environment, and/or online sources for the session's themes. Download the Taking It Home section and adapt it to reflect the actual activities you have included in the session. You can print and photocopy the Taking It Home section for children to bring home, or send it to all parents/caregivers as a group email.

Alternate Activities: Most sessions feature one or more alternate activities. You can substitute these for core session activities or add them to the core activities. Sometimes the alternate activities are simpler, useful if the group as a whole seems unready for the core activities or if the group includes children with vast developmental differences. Materials checklists, preparation, and descriptions for alternate activities appear in the same format as they do in openings, closings, core activities, and Faith in Action activities.

Resources: The curriculum includes the full text of stories, the handouts, and all the other leader resources you need to lead every element of the session.

Black-and-white illustrations (coloring sheets) for each story can be printed from the right-hand sidebar. These illustrations will also download automatically when you download the entire curriculum.

Copy illustrations along with other handouts for participants and review all the leader resources before leading a session.

Concluding each session, under the heading "Find Out More," you will find book and video titles, website URLs, and other resources to further explore session topics.

LEADER GUIDELINES

The Creating Home program focuses on the functions homes serve for humans and other animals. Some functions, such as shelter, are concrete and universal. Others, such as fostering cooperation and providing

personal safety, are less tangible and not necessarily found in all family homes. As the leader, you must be ready to leave at the threshold of the meeting space your preconceptions about "home" and about norms in family life.

Before the program begins, ask your religious education director about differences in family configuration and home circumstances among the children in the group. Find out whether any participants have a family or home situation that may give rise to the child's discomfort or invite disclosures during a session.

Every child's family home is unique: Some children have two parents, some have one. Some are parented by grandparents or other adults. Some children have had one home their entire lives; some may have moved frequently. A group may include children who have lived in an institutional setting. An invitation to name the members of their family home may cause uncertainty or sadness in an adopted child, a foster child, or a child who lives with a parent and that parent's new adult partner.

Some children may live in large houses and have their own bedrooms. Others may live in small apartments where they sleep with a sibling or parent. You cannot assume that every child has a kitchen table or, if they do, that the family sits down together for meals there. Be sensitive to differences, and avoid presenting a "norm."

Be ready to talk privately with a child who begins to describe a situation in her/his home that suggests a safety concern. Speak to your religious education director to ensure that your congregation and state safety policies can be followed.

IMPLEMENTATION

Every congregation has its own approach to structuring religious education. You can implement the Creating Home program with any model your congregation uses.

As leader, you will choose the combination of activities for each session. You know best how to shape the Creating Home program to fit your congregation's religious education model, the culture of your congregation, the children in the group, and the time and space allocated for each session.

Some activities call for adult visitors. Arrange visits at least a few weeks in advance and confirm the arrangements a week before the session. While planning these visits takes time and effort, they provide valuable opportunities for children to interact with adults in the congregation whom they might not otherwise meet. As their circle of Unitarian Universalist role models widens, children will gain a sense of belonging in their faith home and begin to imagine themselves as adults in the congregation.

A few core activities require you to take the group outdoors. Find suitable places well in advance and obtain necessary permissions. Make sure you will not disturb others in the outdoor space and check for insects and poisonous plants.

Within the sessions, you will find suggestions for adaptation. Feel free to add your own. Grab a highlighter and choose what you feel is best for your space, time, and group. Remember, you are the best guide for these young learners.

BEFORE YOU START

As soon as your program has been scheduled, prepare a calendar with the dates for each session. The more co-leaders and parent volunteers a program includes, the more useful a calendar will be. Post the calendar in your shared meeting space, and duplicate it for each adult participant.

Use the calendar as a "to do" list. For sessions with activities that need assistance from others in the congregation or community, write reminders to contact these people well in advance and to confirm their engagement closer to the session date.

Your communication to parents and families can powerfully boost the impact of Creating Home. Use your calendar to note when you will download, customize, and distribute the Taking It Home resources provided for each session. If the group will go off-site for a Faith in Action activity or take a walk beyond the grounds of your congregational meeting place, mark on the calendar the dates you need to create, distribute, and collect permission forms. Mark the dates when you will email or distribute reminders or requests to parents.

If the group will have different leaders for different sessions, make sure to assign responsibilities as appropriate for distributing permission forms, requests for volunteers, and other advance communications to parents. Note these tasks and who will execute them on the calendar.

Make nametags for participants and leaders before the first session. Keep extra materials to make additional nametags for newcomers or guests.

The "Word Wall"

Kindergartners and first graders love to see newly learned words. The Creating Home Word Wall, introduced in the Closing of Session 1, offers a way for beginning readers to build a vocabulary associated with home, family, faith, family home, and faith home. Each subsequent Closing suggests new words to add to the Word Wall.

To implement the Word Wall, identify a wall or part of a wall in your meeting space where you can post words

for the duration of your Creating Home program. The wall space should accommodate up to 30 index cards or post-its and be visible by participants at their eye level. Make a sign to label your Creating Home Word Wall. (Instead you can use a long piece of paper or cloth which you can roll up and store after each session.)

Story Coloring Sheets

This program provides original illustrations for every core story. These are black-and-white line drawings, designed for the children to use as coloring sheets. When you find a story online, you will see its coloring sheet in the sidebar of that page; download, print, and copy for all participants. Or, you may wish to download and print the packet of all the coloring sheets for Creating Home stories ([PDF, 18 pages](#)).

Preparing a Labyrinth

Before the first session, acquire or create a floor labyrinth that will work well in the meeting space. The labyrinth provides a focus for ritual practice and community-building. Placing their name stones on the labyrinth at each gathering demonstrates the presence, and the importance, of each member of the Creating Home community. Using the labyrinth, the children will experience crossing a threshold and gathering at a shared altar. You may wish to use the labyrinth for a walking meditation, presented in Session 1.

If your congregation has a floor labyrinth, reserve it for all the dates when the Creating Home program will meet.

If your congregation does not own a labyrinth, making one together can be an excellent way for co-leaders to ready themselves to lead the program. And, it can be a nice way to engage parents and other congregants in your religious education program. You can mark out a labyrinth with masking tape directly on the floor of the meeting space, if you expect it can remain intact for the duration of the program. Find instructions for laying out a rustic floor labyrinth in the [Chartres pattern](#).

For a portable labyrinth your congregation can keep for further use, you may draw or paint the labyrinth on a large, light-colored sheet, a vinyl tablecloth, or painter's canvas. A flannel-backed vinyl tablecloth has particular advantages: It is durable and will stick better to the flooring, reducing the chances that children will slip when they walk on the labyrinth.

To make a portable labyrinth, follow the instructions provided in Session 1: On the Threshold. Look in Session 1's Resources section under "Leader Resources" for detailed instructions and links to websites with a variety of labyrinth designs and background information.

Name Stones

Gather stones to use as "name stones," enough for participants and any future newcomers or guests. Find a basket for the stones.

Requirements for Your Meeting Space

Work with your religious education team and congregational leaders to ensure that the program has an adequate meeting space. Multiple activities occur in each session: lighting the chalice, exploring the labyrinth, sitting in a circle for a story or sharing, and hands-on projects for which children need to sit together at tables and share arts and crafts materials. The ideal meeting space for this program is spacious, with multiple areas including a carpeted space for circle time, another floor space large enough for your labyrinth, and child-size tables and chairs. Within the meeting space, decide where you will use the labyrinth, where you will gather the group for opening and closing rituals, and where you will locate the Word Wall if you want to have one.

RESOURCES

Labyrinths

Session 1: On the Threshold provides information and links to help you make or obtain a floor labyrinth for use with Creating Home. In the Session 1 Resources section, see "Leader Resources" for instructions and helpful web links for making a labyrinth. Web links under "Find Out More," will take you to information about labyrinths in different parts of the world, their history, and their contemporary spiritual uses.

Background Reading

The Gift of Faith: Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children by Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar, 2nd edition (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2003) offers reflection on the role participation in religious community can play in young children's spiritual, faith, and overall development.

This book showcases some model classrooms and provides strategies for crafting an educational setting that teaches young school age children respect for differences, inclusion, and caring behavior: *Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Preschool and the Early Grades* by the Teaching Tolerance Project (Montgomery, Alabama: Southern Poverty Law Center, 1997).

Find a broad and compelling discussion of inclusion in children's learning environments, along with suggestions for adaptation to embrace some cognitive, mobility, and other limitations children may have, in *Welcoming Children with Special Needs: A Guidebook for Faith Communities* by Sally Patton (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association).

Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook by Tracey L. Hurd (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005) presents a helpful discussion of developmental characteristics children are likely to have at different ages. The book offers strategies educators can use to design and lead age-appropriate, effective learning experiences grounded in developmental knowledge.

Hurd's book belongs to the Unitarian Universalist Association's Lifespan Faith Development Toolkit Series for religious educators, which also includes *Stories in Faith: Exploring Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources Through Wisdom Tales* by Gail Forsyth-Vail and *When Youth Lead: A Guide to Intergenerational Social Justice Ministry*, plus *101 Youth Projects* by Jill M. Schwendeman, both published in 2007 by the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

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
religiouseducation@uua.org

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation:

Number of Participants:

Age range:

Did you work with (a) co-facilitator(s)?

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

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

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

Did you enrich the program with any resources that you would recommend to others?

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

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

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORM

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

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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: ON THE THRESHOLD

INTRODUCTION

I want to remind myself and others that our homes can become sacred places, filled with life and meaning. — Gunilla Norris

This session is the threshold of a journey that leaders and participants will take together, an exploration of the spiritual sense of home. In Session 1, children will learn the word "threshold" and investigate its meaning, beginning with the threshold of the program meeting space.

Most simply, a threshold identifies the entrance to and exit from a home. The room where you meet, the building that serves as a home for your faith community, and an individual family home each have a threshold. Gunilla Norris, a meditation teacher and author of the book *Being Home: Discovering the Spiritual in the Everyday* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Hidden Spring, 2001), believes that homes are sacred places. In this session, children are guided to pay special attention to their entering and leaving a home by crossing its threshold.

Home is a place you journey from and return to each day of your life. Even if your home changes, its relationship to your journeying does not. To combine the message of threshold and the message of journey, *Creating Home* uses a labyrinth. In existence for over 3,000 years, labyrinths lend themselves to a ritual of discovery. The labyrinth provided an ancient form of walking meditation. In this program, a labyrinth-based opening ritual designed for young children will help them slow down, focus their attention, and mark the moment they cross the threshold into a place of learning. The children will place their individual name stones upon the labyrinth as you open each session, and remove their name stones as part of the closing ritual. You will find resources with more information about labyrinths for yourself and for participants' families in this session's Taking It Home and Resources sections.

GOALS

This session will:

- Begin to develop participants' sense of belonging to and contributing to this Creating Home community
- Introduce a "threshold" as a place of entrance and exit
- Introduce the idea of journeying from and returning to home

- Introduce Unitarian Universalist spiritual practices, including rituals using the chalice and the labyrinth

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Practice ritual together using the chalice, the labyrinth, and name stones
- Experience symbols by choosing and decorating a name stone to represent themselves
- Physically explore the concepts of threshold, journey, and return, using the labyrinth
- Learn the term "family home" and describe their own family home

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	10
Activity 1: Home and Back Again	5
Activity 2: Story — The Magic Vase	5
Activity 3: Walking the Labyrinth (concurrent with Activity 4 and/or Activity 6)	25
Activity 4: Our Name Stones	10
Activity 5: Singing "The More We Get Together"	5
Activity 6: Decorating the Threshold	15
Faith in Action: Decorating Others' Thresholds — Short-term or Long-term	20
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Building Homes Free Play	20
Alternate Activity 2: Finger Labyrinth	10
Alternate Activity 3: Making a Magic Vase	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Every adult has a unique ancestral history. As a leader, you will model for participants the way you embrace and honor your own.

Your history with the word "home" is likely to creep into your presentation of this program. To acknowledge your personal associations with "home" and to gently set aside any negative or unsettling connotations before

your session begins, use this spiritual preparation activity:

Locate the place where the group will meet. Take off your shoes and stand at the threshold of the space. If the threshold is a doorway, place your hands on the frame. If there is no door, stand where all participants will step into the space and imagine a threshold there. Close your eyes. Ground yourself by pressing your feet down and slightly bending your knees.

Think about the children and adults who have passed this way to begin or to end a time for learning. Absorb their energy and enthusiasm.

Now ponder the single most important thing you learned from your own home experiences. Concentrate on the names of the children you will soon meet in this space, and open your eyes. Cross the threshold into a new place where you and the children can create home in the context of a congregational community, while exploring new ideas.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, folded or rolled to conceal its design
- Basket or bowl of stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words, so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Place the labyrinth in the center of the area where you will unfold/unroll it. Make sure you have enough space for the opened labyrinth.
- On top of the folded labyrinth, place the basket or bowl of stones. Place the chalice next to the basket.

Description of Activity

The opening of a session can set the tone for everything that follows today and in future sessions. During this opening you will introduce new concepts and an opening ritual. Try to sense when you need to slow down and allow children to comment and ask questions. The more you help the children uncover what they already know about labyrinths, thresholds, and rituals, the more receptive they will be as you guide them toward new understandings in this program.

As children arrive, invite each to choose a stone from the basket or bowl. Ask each child to find a place to sit, making a circle around the folded or rolled-up labyrinth.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. You may invite participants to recite with you. Direct their attention to the newsprint you have posted with the words. You may wish to guide them by saying each line and inviting them to repeat it after you:

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

In these words or your own, say:

Welcome to the Creating Home program and this room. When you came into this room, you

crossed over a threshold. Does anyone know what a threshold is?

Allow responses. Then, tell the group:

A threshold is the entrance to or exit from any space. A threshold can be a place of greeting. It can be a place of saying goodbye. A threshold can be a place of surprises, such as the delivery of an unexpected package or the arrival of an unexpected guest.

Then say in your own words or these:

After you crossed the threshold to enter this room today, you chose a stone. This is your name stone. It represents you while you are with us in the Creating Home program. Each time we meet, you will cross the threshold, find your name stone, and place the stone on our labyrinth.

Now direct the children's attention to the labyrinth. Tell them it is a special part of the Creating Home program. Ask the children to help you unroll or unfold it and spread it on the floor.

As the labyrinth becomes visible, ask the group what they think it is. Allow some suggestions. Then tell them the image is a labyrinth.

Some children may have guessed that the labyrinth is a maze. Whether or not mazes have been mentioned, mention them now. Ask a child who has seen one to tell what a maze is.

Then explain the difference:

A labyrinth looks a bit like a maze, but is not the same. A maze is a puzzle. It is easy to take a wrong turn in a maze. It is easy to get stuck in a maze. But, a labyrinth has no wrong turns.

Point out that your labyrinth has a single threshold — a place for entrance and exit. You can give your group some background about labyrinths:

- People have made labyrinths in cathedrals, in fields, and in homes in different parts of the world.
- Walking in a labyrinth is an ancient form of meditation. Meditation is a way to relax your body and open your mind.
- When you enter a labyrinth to meditate, you enter by crossing its threshold just as we crossed the threshold to this meeting space today.

You may wish to describe how people use a labyrinth for meditation. If you will do Activity 3: Walking the Labyrinth, later in this session, tell the children they will

have an opportunity to try it themselves. Use these words, or your own:

You cross the threshold to enter the labyrinth. Then, you walk along the path slowly and meditate until you reach the center. At the center, you open your heart and open your mind. Then you turn around and walk the labyrinth path back from the center, and exit by crossing the threshold. This experience is a way to stop, slow down and reflect for a moment on our time together and anything else that might be on your mind.

Going into the labyrinth can feel like going on a journey and returning home again.

Tell the children that later they will explore how it feels to cross the threshold and walk to the center of the labyrinth. Invite them now to place their name stones on the labyrinth. Depending on the size of the group, you may choose to invite the children to approach the labyrinth one at a time, and then return to the circle, rather than have all the children place their stones on the labyrinth at once.

You may tell them that placing their name stones on the inside of the labyrinth, across its threshold, symbolizes that they have crossed the threshold into their work together and are now in a special place.

Including All Participants

If a child is physically unable to place a name stone on the labyrinth, choose another child to do so for him/her, or invite him/her to ask another child to do it.

ACTIVITY 1: HOME AND BACK AGAIN (5 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Children will learn to define the threshold of their family homes by actively interpreting the story below, which you will read aloud or tell in your own words.

Have participants stand in a semi-circle or circle, so that all can see you and all can stretch their arms without touching another child. Tell them they will act out a story that will you will share. You may say:

Every time you hear the word "I," act out whatever "I" am doing.

Prepare the group for the story with these practice phrases. Demonstrate how to act out each phrase:

- I jump.
- I eat.
- I slowly pick up my backpack.

Read the story below, using your tone of voice to call participants' attention to the phrases that begin with "I" — these are the phrases they can act out. Then read the story a second time, substituting the "I" phrases in parentheses.

Today is a school day at my house. I jump out of bed (I stretch and roll out of bed). I dress myself. I run (I walk) down the stairs.

I quickly eat (I slowly eat) my breakfast.

My parents meet me at the front door. I hug them as they say, "Have a good day at school."

I grab (I slowly pick up) my backpack. I grab (I carefully pick up) my lunchbox. Then I walk (I skip) across the threshold, going out the front door to the school bus.

After school, I ride home on the school bus. I step carefully (I hop) off the school bus at my stop. I walk (I run) down the sidewalk. I open the door and step across the threshold. I throw down (I carefully put down) my backpack and my empty lunchbox. I take a deep breath and I yell (I whisper), "I'm home."

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE MAGIC VASE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of story, ["The Magic Vase"](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: ["The Magic Vase" coloring sheet](#), and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Read and print out story, "The Magic Vase." Prepare to tell it without reading directly from the script.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

This wisdom tale, adapted from a story in the book *One Hundred Wisdom Tales from Around the World* by Margaret Silf (Pilgrim Press) shows how something from the outside world can help change happen within a family home. The eldest son has to cross the threshold and go outside the home in order to make changes within his home.

Settle children in a circle. Invite them to close their eyes while they listen to the story, "The Magic Vase."

Tell the story.

Pause at the conclusion. Then, invite discussion with these or other questions:

- Is the vase really magic?
- Why is the story called "The Magic Vase?"
- Did the vase make something happen? Or did people in the story make something happen?
- Who made something happen? How?
- Why do you think the oldest child went across the threshold, outside his home, for what he needed to get? Was something missing from his home that should have been there? What was it?

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "The Magic Vase" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 3: WALKING THE LABYRINTH (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Labyrinth

Preparation for Activity

- Have the labyrinth spread out on the floor.
- While you guide individual children to walk the labyrinth, you may wish to engage the other participants in Activity 4: Our Name Stones or Activity 6: Decorating the Threshold. A concurrent activity will allow children walking the labyrinth to go at their own pace without the pressure of others awaiting their turns. Prepare the alternate activities in another area of the meeting space, and arrange for another adult to supervise.

Description of Activity

Tell participants, in your own words:

For many hundreds of years — since long before anyone in the room was born — people around the world have used a labyrinth for meditation. When you meditate, you keep your body still, and relaxed. You keep your mind still and relaxed. You keep your feelings relaxed, too. Many people believe meditation helps them open up their minds to new ideas and their hearts to new feelings.

Now you will have an opportunity to try it yourselves.

Explain the activity, using these words, or your own:

One at a time, you will cross the threshold to enter the labyrinth. Then, you will walk along the path slowly until you reach the center. At the center, you stay still for a moment and open your heart and open your mind. Then you turn around and walk the labyrinth path back from the center. Follow the whole path, and exit by crossing the threshold.

We want to be mindful when we cross the threshold. This means we are paying attention to what we are doing. When you come into the labyrinth, you might think about what it feels like when you go someplace new. You leave home, and start a journey.

When you cross the threshold again to come out of the labyrinth, that means your journey is over. Coming out of the labyrinth is like coming home again.

You may choose to repeat some of this instruction for each child, as they prepare to walk the labyrinth.

Before inviting the first child to walk the labyrinth, remove the stones and the chalice placed there during the Opening. Model mindfulness as you remove these symbols with careful attention. Children will notice your actions.

Demonstrate how the children should slowly follow the path and open their minds to all that happens. Then ask children to take turns walking the path. The waiting is difficult for younger children and you want each child to have time to walk as they choose, without pressure. Try having one child at a time walk as the other children start Activity 4: Our Name Stones or Activity Six: Decorating the Threshold with another adult.

As closure for this activity, after all of the children have walked the labyrinth gather the entire group in a circle around the labyrinth. Draw out individuals' responses with these questions:

- How is walking in a labyrinth different than it might be to walk in a maze?
- How did it feel to be guided by the path?
- How did it feel to find the center?
- Was it easy or hard to keep your attention on walking the labyrinth? What else did you think about while you were walking?
- What did it feel like to cross the threshold going in?

- What did it feel like to cross the threshold going out?
- Do you think it will be exactly the same or different if you walk the labyrinth again? Why?

ACTIVITY 4: OUR NAME STONES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Name stones, one for each participant
- Newspaper
- Permanent markers
- Arts and crafts materials, including a strong glue to affix decorations to a stone
- Optional: Paper and a pen or pencil

Preparation for Activity

- Spread newspaper to cover floor or tables where participants will decorate their name stones.
- Prepare a safe, out-of-the-way place to leave decorated name stones to dry.
- Gather markers, glue, and other arts and crafts materials and place them where participants can share.

Description of Activity

To help children find their name stones for the opening and closing rituals in future sessions, and to reinforce the idea that a name stone symbolizes each person in the group, children will personalize their name stones.

Remind them that each time this group meets they will cross the threshold into this meeting space, find their own name stones in the basket, and place their name stones on the labyrinth. Tell them that now they will each write their name on their stone and decorate the stone any way they wish to help them recognize it each time they come.

Allow children to retrieve the stones they placed on the labyrinth during this session's opening ritual and bring their stones to the work tables where you have set out arts and crafts materials.

Beginning writers may not be sure how to write their names. Offer to help. You can print the name on a piece of white paper, and invite the child to copy the letters onto his/her stone. Make sure you have spelled the child's name correctly!

When all the name stones are finished, collect them in the basket. If you are using paint or glue, some name stones may still be wet when your session ends. If you

are leaving name stones to dry in the meeting room, lay down newspaper in a safe place and ask the children to place their stones there when they are finished decorating them.

ACTIVITY 5: SINGING "THE MORE WE GET TOGETHER" (5 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Listen online to the song, ["The More We Get Together"](#) if you do not know it.

Description of Activity

Singing and moving together builds a sense of community among the children. Teach them to sing the song, "The More We Get Together," which is in the public domain. The lyrics are:

The more we get together, together, together

The more we get together, the happier we'll be.

Because your friends are my friends and my friends are your friends.

The more we get together, the happier we'll be.

Then, add a game. Ask the group to spread out across the room. Tell them that as soon as they begin singing the song, they should each move from person to person and link arms with everyone they find. Challenge the group to make a chain that includes everyone before they finish singing the song. Say, "One, two, three!" to start the song and the game. You may wish to play this game several times.

ACTIVITY 6: DECORATING THE THRESHOLD (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Colored tissue paper, cut into five-inch squares (ten squares for each flower)
- Green construction paper to cut into leaf shapes
- Markers
- Optional: Leader Resource 1, [Leaf Shape](#) (included in this document)
- Pencils and scissors (including left-handed scissors)
- Tape
- Colored ribbon

Preparation for Activity

- Cut tissue paper into five-inch squares. Each flower requires approximately ten squares.

- Print out Leader Resource 1, Leaf Shape on heavy card stock to make a template for tracing and cutting out leaves from green construction paper.
- Optional: Cut leaves out of construction paper in advance. Make sure leaf shapes are large enough for a child to write their name.
- Make sure the threshold you plan to decorate will be the group's to use for the duration of the Creating Home program.

Description of Activity

The children decorate the threshold of the meeting space to focus on this special place of entering and leaving. Each child will make a flower out of tissue paper and write their name on a green paper leaf. With leader help, participants fasten their artwork to the doorway.

Give each child approximately ten different-colored squares of tissue paper. Show the group how to make a flower:

- Stack the squares.
- Roll the squares up into a tight cylinder.
- Tape the cylinder closed with a single piece of tape around its middle.
- Fold each sheet outward and down toward the tape to bloom the flower.

Now, invite children to make flowers with tissue paper and write their names on green leaves. (In the spirit of this activity, it may be more important that children write their names themselves than that they write their names exactly correctly.)

If participants will cut out their own leaf shapes, distribute green paper, the leaf shape template, pencils for tracing, and scissors. Offer assistance as needed. Of course, the children can draw their own leaf shapes instead of using the template.

Set aside extra green paper leaves for future participants and visitors to add their names to your threshold.

Children may tie their flowers in the center with ribbons to make "stems." Tape completed flowers and leaves to mark the threshold of the meeting space. Place the decorations so they will not be damaged as people pass through the doorway.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed

- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, markers, and tape
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Relight the chalice before gathering participants for the closing.
- Review "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*. You can [listen to the song](#) online. Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants, or prepare Taking It Home and email to all parents.
- Optional: Identify a wall space that can accommodate up to 30 index cards or post-its and be visible by participants at their eye level. Create and post a sign to label this space the Creating Home "Word Wall." If you do not have a wall space to use for the duration of the Creating Home program, create a movable wall with poster board or fabric that you can display each time you meet. Print the new words for this session, "threshold" and "ritual," on index cards or post-its and attach them to the wall.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Tell the group that it is now time to share a closing ritual.

Relight the chalice. If you are using a battery-powered light, have a child "light" the chalice.

Explain that a closing ritual marks the end of your religious education time together today. You may want to define the word "ritual" for the group as an activity that is done again and again for a reason. Rituals can be as simple as brushing your teeth every night. Some rituals have a sacred purpose.

Ask the group if they know of any rituals people do in your congregation. You may prompt them that lighting and extinguishing the chalice are common rituals in a Unitarian Universalist faith home. Remind them that every time the group meets, you will also light and extinguish the chalice.

Point out that in this session the children have used the chalice, the labyrinth, and name stones for rituals. Tell

them that the group will continue opening and closing their time together with the same rituals.

If name stones are on the labyrinth, ask the children to find their stones and carefully place them in the basket. If name stones are drying after Activity 4: Our Name Stones, tell the children you will return their stones to the basket once they are dry.

Ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

Invite the children to form a circle and hold hands to sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite the children to recite with you the chorus words:

When our heart is in a holy place,

When our heart is in a holy place.

We are blessed with love and amazing grace.

When our heart is in a holy place.

If you have a Word Wall, direct children's attention to it now. Show them the words "threshold" and "ritual" that you have printed on index cards or post-its. Congratulate them for learning two new words today, and post the words on the Word Wall or ask two volunteer to do it.

Say in your own words:

Today we have been talking about our family homes and creating our Unitarian Universalist faith home together by all our activities. Each of you is an important part of our group. I'm glad you were here and I look forward to having you cross the threshold again next time.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind participants to give the handout to their parents.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: DECORATING OTHERS' THRESHOLDS — SHORT-TERM OR LONG-TERM (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Arts and crafts materials
- Tape or approved mounting material for use at residential facility
- Bottle(s) of hand sanitizer

Preparation for Activity

- In advance, contact an elderly housing or assisted living facility in your community. Obtain permission to donate the children's artwork to decorate the thresholds (the doorways) of residents' rooms. Or, arrange a visit where the children can work together with residents to make decorations for the thresholds. In either case, offer to post the decorations on residents' doorways yourself or with the children.
- Gather the arts and crafts materials you will use to make the decorations. If you are making the decorations in your regular meeting place with your group, pre-set work tables with arts and crafts materials. If you are visiting a residential facility, pack up the materials to bring with you, including hand sanitizer.
- If you are taking your group to a residential facility, make sure the date and time are convenient for your co-leader as well as participants and their families. Secure parental permission using the form provided by your religious education director. Arrange adequate supervision and transportation for all children. As needed, ask parents and other congregants to help.
- Before your visit, let your contact at the residential facility know how many adults and children are coming, and their names.
- When you arrive at the residential facility, locate restrooms children may use. Before the children meet residents, have them wash with hand sanitizer.

Description of Activity

This activity brings decorations to the doorways of people in a residential setting. It is a short-term project if the children make the decorations for you or another adult to bring to the residential facility. It can be a long-term project if they visit the facility to bring the decorations and meet with residents or to join with residents to make decorations on-site at the facility.

Tell the children that they will create artwork to decorate the threshold of someone who lives not in a family home, but in a different kind of home. Explain that sometimes when people need special help or medicine every day, they share a home with others who have the same kinds of needs. At this kind of home, helpers such as doctors, nurses, and others are there all day and all night. Invite children to raise their hands if they know anyone who lives in a nursing home, assisted living home, or other group home. If no one has an example,

offer an example from your own knowledge or experience.

Guide a discussion to explore ways a residential facility is like, and unlike, a family home. Some children may be familiar with residential facilities. You may correct any gross misinformation a child may offer, but do allow participants to speculate what it might be like to live in a residential facility. Use these questions to prompt discussion:

- With whom do you normally eat dinner? How many people sit down together? Do you all eat the same food for dinner?
- If someone lives in a residential facility instead of a family home, with whom might they eat dinner? Would everyone eat the same thing for dinner?
- Where do you sleep? Do you share a bedroom with someone in your family?
- Where do people sleep in a residential facility?
- What else do you know/wonder about living in a residential facility?
- What do you think would be nice about living in a residential facility? What do you think may be better about living in a family home?

Introduce the idea that by making threshold decorations for someone who lives in a residential facility, children can bring the gift of attention and beauty to the residents' home, much as the boy did for his family in the story *The Magic Vase*.

If the children will not be visiting a facility, the discussion about a residential facility can take place while they are creating the decorations. While the children work, visit them individually, ask about their creations, and tell them how their artwork will add beauty and warmth to the threshold of a resident's room.

If you have arranged to bring the group to make decorations on-site at a residential facility, prepare the children for meeting residents. Explain that some residents may have difficulty hearing, seeing, or speaking, and that some may be seated in wheelchairs or use canes to help them walk. Tell the children they may need to say their names more than once or to walk slowly if they are walking with one of the residents. Encourage participants to be ready to tell residents that the Creating Home group is learning about how special the threshold is in a home.

Distribute permission forms and complete any other logistical preparations for the visit.

Including All Participants

You may have children in your group who live now, or have lived, in foster care, in a half-way house, or in a residential facility. In your discussion, be careful to avoid assumptions that all children always do, or all should, live in family homes.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

To reflect on today's session, ask yourself:

1. How have my/our expectations about today's time been met?
2. What surprised me about today?
3. What can I do differently as a leader next time to meet the needs of this group?
4. What have I learned about the type of activity that this group responds to? How can I use what I've learned as I plan the next session?

TAKING IT HOME

I want to remind myself and others that our homes can become sacred places, filled with life and meaning. – Gunilla Norris

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

We began our exploration of home by talking about thresholds – places of entrance and exit where we begin and end our journeys. We created name stones which we will use throughout this curriculum, and placed them on a labyrinth that will be a part of each future Creating Home session. By walking the labyrinth, the children experienced a ritual of journeying while still remaining within the “home” that we created in our learning space.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Making name stones was part of our ritual of honoring each person and their place in our learning home. Children love to hear about their names, how they were chosen, and the associations to family, friends or values that led to the choice of their particular names. You may want to tell stories of people for whom your children were named, or stories about your own name that help to deepen your family's sense of how you are tied together not only with each other, but also with your extended family or ancestors.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Ritual

Your house is full of thresholds – not only the doorways that lead to the outside, but also doorways between rooms. You can bless your house and the many activities you enter into at each doorway by taking a journey together through the house. At each doorway in

your house, say "When I enter this room I"
(Everyone has a turn to say things that you enjoy doing in that room.) Then say together "May everyone enter here in joy and go out in peace."

A Family Game

You can play a game at any threshold of your house by having an adult and/or a child stand in the doorway with their hands behind their back. A third person stands in front as the "Big Bad Wolf" and says "Little pig, little pig, let me come in!" The Big Bad Wolf tries, without using their hands, to get past the Little Pig(s) to enter the room. To reinforce a sense of safety and welcome in your home, once a child breaks through, the response can be "Oh, it's you!" and a hug). After the "Wolf" succeeds, the players switch so that everyone has a chance to play all parts.

A Family Adventure

The children in Creating Home had the opportunity to explore a labyrinth, and your family may be able to walk a full-scale labyrinth together. The labyrinth locator on the website of the [Labyrinth Society](#) allows you to input your location and find a labyrinth near you. Most labyrinth sites welcome visitors, and walking a labyrinth together can be both an enjoyable experience and a spiritual practice for adults as well as children.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Labyrinths. Learn about the history of labyrinths and their contemporary spiritual and educational uses, as well as how to draw or build a labyrinth, from the website of [The Labyrinth Society](#).

On his website, Tony Phillips, a professor of mathematics at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, offers information on labyrinths and mazes, along with activities for children to explore or build a [Cretan pattern labyrinth](#). He also provides a systematic way to [draw the Cretan labyrinth](#).

The [Labyrinth Society of Edmonton](#) website offers a good description of the difference between a labyrinth and a maze.

Finger labyrinths. See a variety of [finger labyrinth designs](#) at the Awakenings website.

Carved labyrinths. View [finger labyrinths carved of wood](#) available for purchase on the website of the Relax4Life Center.

Identifying "Home"

An excellent adult book is *Dakota* by Kathleen Norris (Houghton Mifflin Books, 2001). The author describes life in her home on the prairie. She uses the term "spiritual geography" to talk about how place helps us grow and develop.

Home: A Journey through America by Thomas Locker (San Diego, New York, London: Voyager Books, Harcourt, Inc., 2000) has short poetry and prose sections about home, appropriate for school age children, by writers including Carl Sandburg, Henry David Thoreau, Jane Yolen and Abraham Lincoln. The writings and beautiful illustrations will delight young readers as they "tour" landscapes that others define as home.

A wonderful story for children that involves how we build homes and connects with the threshold game above is *The Three Little Wolves and the Big, Bad Pig* by Eugene Tivizas (Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1993).

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: BUILDING HOMES FREE PLAY (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Magazines to cut up, such as *National Geographic*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, or others rich with visual representations of diverse kinds of homes
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors), tape or glue sticks, and poster board
- Building toys such as wooden blocks, Lincoln Logs®, and/or Legos®

Preparation for Activity

- From the magazines, cut out pictures that represent all kinds of homes where people live.
- Glue or tape pictures to poster board to make collages about home. Mount the posters on the wall at the eye level of children when they are sitting on the floor to play with building toys.

Description of Activity

Children hear the term "family home," see examples, and experiment to build family homes on their own.

Gather the group in the floor space where they will use the building toys. Direct their attention to the pictures of family homes you have mounted and displayed. Ask them which ones they might like to live in, and why. Ask if any of the pictures have something in common with their own homes.

Now place the building toys on the floor. Allow the children to build all kinds of homes with the blocks. Visit individual children while they work and ask them to tell you about the house they are building.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: FINGER LABYRINTH (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1, [Finger Labyrinth](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- Cotton-tipped swabs
- Paint, in wide-mouthed containers

Preparation for Activity

- Print out and photocopy Handout 1, Finger Labyrinth.

Description of Activity

Tell children they will now let their fingers take a journey and return home, using a finger labyrinth. Provide copies of Handout 1, Finger Labyrinth, cotton swabs, and paint.

Allow children to experiment with walking their fingers across the threshold into the labyrinth. Explain that if they follow the path of the labyrinth, they can walk their fingers in, around, and back out across the threshold.

Invite children to use a cotton-tipped swab dipped in paint to trace the path into, around, and out of their labyrinths.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: MAKING A MAGIC VASE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Clay or modeling dough in different colors

Preparation for Activity

- In the Resources section, under "Leader Resources," find a recipe for homemade modeling dough and web links to more recipes and directions for forming a pinch pot.

Description of Activity

Participants will love to take a magic vase home. Making a vase reinforces the story and strengthens the connection between participants' faith home and family homes.

Allow children to experiment with the clay or modeling dough.

Show the children how to make a pinch pot vase: Form an oval of clay about the size of a small eggplant. Press your thumbs into the center while rotating the pot with your fingers on the outside of the pot. Continue to rotate the pot, molding with thumbs and fingers to build up the vase while keeping the sides a uniform thickness.

Children may take home their vases. Encourage them to use their vases to beautify their homes. Remind them

that these vases can hold real, dried flowers, but will not hold water.

STORY: THE MAGIC VASE

"The Magic Vase" was adapted from "The Magic Vase" as retold by Margaret Silf in One Hundred Wisdom Stories from Around the World, compiled by Margaret Silf (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2003), 41-42. Used by permission, all rights reserved.

There was once a poor family who lived in a drab little house in the neglected part of the city. They tried to be a happy family, but times were hard, and jobs were not easy to come by. As time went on, they began to feel more and more depressed. You could see their depression etching itself even on the house they lived in. They no longer bothered to clean the windows. They didn't tend the little patch of garden in front of the house. The paint peeled off the door and cracks appeared in the brickwork. The threshold of their home showed the sadness in their lives.

One day, the eldest son of the family was roaming idly through the town and he came upon a market place. The stallholders had set up their wares, and there was a bustle of activity. In spite of his feelings of near-despair, the boy found himself being caught up in the excitement of the morning market.

He stopped to watch the people buying fruit and vegetables, freshly baked bread and tempting cakes. He noticed the line at the fish stall, and took a deep breath of pleasure as he passed the stall of fresh summer flowers.

But the stall that attracted him most was a little second-hand stall, tucked away among the awnings of the regular marketers. He had never noticed this stall before. He stopped to investigate. And there, hidden away in the dark recesses, he noticed a beautiful vase.

Rapidly, he fingered the coins in his pocket. He had just enough to meet the modest cost of the vase, but there would be nothing left over. "Ah well," he thought to himself. "Why not? Even if we have a few lean days, I am going to buy this vase. Mom will love it. Everyone will love it." He handed over the contents of his pocket to the woman behind the counter.

As she wrapped the vase in brown paper, the stallholder said to the boy, "Enjoy it, won't you? And treat it well, because it is a magic vase." With these mysterious words ringing in his ears, the lad went off home, proudly carrying his purchase.

To the boy's surprise, no one reproached him for spending all his money on it. Quite the opposite, in fact. Everyone at home was delighted with the vase.

When Dad saw the vase, he realized how shabby the room was, and he went to the cellar, got out the paintbrushes, and gave the room a makeover. And when the second son saw how nice the room looked, with its fresh coat of paint, he fetched a bucket of water and washed the windows and the door, for the first time in years. When the third son looked out of the bright new windows, he realized what a state the garden was in, and went outside to dig it over. When the fourth son saw the newly dug garden, he planted seeds in the flowerbed and watered them lovingly, all through the spring. When summer came and the baby daughter of the family went out to play in the garden, she noticed the flowers that had grown from the seeds, and she gathered a bunch of them to give to her mother.

"Here are some pretty flowers, Mommy," she said, "because we love you." Mom was overjoyed. With tears rising in her eyes, and a lump in her throat, she put the flowers in the magic vase.

HANDOUT 1: FINGER LABYRINTH

Used with Permission



**CREATING HOME: SESSION 1:
LEADER RESOURCE 1: LEAF SHAPE**



FIND OUT MORE

Labyrinths

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SESSION 2: SYMBOLS OF FAITH

INTRODUCTION

We see in the world around us many symbols that teach us the meaning of life. You could notice if you wanted to, but you are usually too busy. We Indians live in a world of symbols and images where the spiritual and the commonplace are one. — John Fire/Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes

Session 2 of Creating Home will discuss the chalice in detail including the sacred circles that surround the chalice. The session also introduces the hymn "Spirit of Life" as a symbol of Unitarian Universalist communities. The children will work to design their own symbol to represent their own faith. Exploring symbols of faith helps children develop the ability to articulate and define what they believe. This ability to define what we believe as Unitarian Universalists is an important skill for children to acquire.

Developmentally, symbolic learning is a hard concept for children before the age of nine. Symbols represent something else, often something abstract. Children perceive, understand, and express themselves concretely. Yet, children can cultivate their skills of observation, reflection, and making connections. In *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, Lame Deer reminds us that to understand symbols we must be less busy and more observant. In this session, children slow down and really look at the chalice and the hymn, "Spirit of Life." They will identify other things in their community of faith that they believe are symbols. Symbols can be personal. As participants explore this topic, no identification of a faith symbol is wrong.

This session may be some children's first explicit encounter with the idea of a "symbol." The Opening includes an easy example to share with the group, based on the shape we call a heart, that will help them understand how a familiar shape is a symbol that represents something else.

As you continue the opening and closing rituals introduced in Session 1, be alert to what children do and do not remember about the rituals. Invite new observations and questions about the labyrinth and the term "threshold" as they spend more time with these concepts. Remember that the name stones will be used each session and some children may have been absent during Session 1. Allow time for the new children to decorate their stones.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help participants understand what a symbol is
- Introduce the chalice as a symbol of their Unitarian Universalist faith home
- Help participants recognize the hymn "Spirit of Life" as a symbolic representation of their Unitarian Universalist faith home
- Deepen participants' understanding of the threshold as an important place in the faith home and the family home
- Help participants connect opening and closing spiritual practices with practices of their Unitarian Universalist faith home

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Create a personal faith symbol or decorate a chalice
- Construct a chalice as a symbol of their faith home to use in their family home
- Listen and interact with the story, "[Flame of Learning, Chalice of Love](#)" (included in this document). Explore the meaning of the components of the chalice symbol
- Learn the hymn, "Spirit of Life"
- Create personal symbols of faith
- Optional: Internalize the chalice story by participating in a Faith in Action project involving refugees

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	10
Activity 1: Story — Flame of Learning, Chalice of Love	5
Activity 2: Connecting Circles	10
Activity 3: Spirit of Life Wrist Scarf Dance	10
Activity 4: Our Own Faith Symbols	15
Activity 5: Circle Round the Chalice	5
Faith in Action: Refugees' New Homes — Long-term	10

Faith in Action: Homeless People's Needs — Short-term	45
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Wax-resistant Chalice Painting	15
Alternate Activity 2: Stained Glass Chalice	20
Alternate Activity 3: Circle Connect Us	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Sit or stand and close your eyes. Holding the chalice, explore it with your hands. Touch the base. Feel the curve of the bowl. Breathe deeply and be open to what the chalice symbolizes to you about the Unitarian Universalist faith. Try not to limit your thoughts to preconceived ideas about the chalice. Open your heart and mind to new meanings.

Open your eyes and look at the chalice. How is it different than what your hands told you? What things can be known without sight?

Now think about the children in this group. In what ways are they different than you expected? Is there one child that has an unexpected shine? Open your heart, mind, eyes, ears and hands to the children this week and to new possibilities in how they see the symbol of the chalice.

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: A picture of a real human heart and a picture of a heart shape
- Optional: A national flag or a picture of one, a peace symbol, and/or a television remote control

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will explain the concept of a symbol during the Opening. Gather the symbols you want to show the group.
- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint and post.
- Post a blank sheet of newsprint if you plan to draw the heart shape or other symbols.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- Place the basket of stones on the labyrinth.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. The labyrinth should be spread on the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand if needed.

Be aware that some children may not have chosen a name stone and will need to do that now. Always have extra stones so you can offer the newcomers and any guests a chance to be part of the ritual. Being welcoming in this way models the ritual of hospitality the group will formally explore in Session 12: John Murray.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to say with you:

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

Tell the children that one at a time, they may place their stones upon the labyrinth. You may say:

This labyrinth reminds us that we are taking a journey together. Every session is yet another portion of that journey. Each time we meet, you will be asked to place your name stone within the labyrinth. Each stone is a symbol of us as members of this Creating Home community. While placing your stones, please say your name and share any joys or concerns you have had since we last met. Joys are the things that make you feel happy and concerns are worries. Sharing our joys and concerns with each other is a tradition in our faith community."

Invite children to come up, one at a time, to place their stone upon the labyrinth, say their name, and voice any joys and concerns. You may have to prompt each individual participant until the group gets used to this opening ritual. When all have placed their name stones on the labyrinth, affirm, "It is very good to be together."

Tell the group that today's session introduces some symbols of our Unitarian Universalist faith. You may say, in your own words:

A symbol can be a picture, an object, a song, or anything that stands for something else. Usually, the "something else" is something you can't see, like a feeling, or an idea, or something really big, like a whole country. Symbols can make it easy for us to share feelings and ideas with one another.

Extinguish the chalice.

Now, ask the children to touch the place on their body where their heart is (and demonstrate). Ask if any of them know what the heart inside their body looks like. If you have brought a picture of a real heart, show them. Then ask the children to draw a heart with their fingers in the air. Most children will draw the heart shape. If you have brought a picture of the heart shape, show it to the group. Or, draw the heart shape on the newsprint you have posted.

Ask what children think of when they see the heart shape. Most will say "love" or "I love you." You can explain to children that the heart shape is a symbol for the heart inside our bodies, which we can't actually see, and a symbol for love, which is a feeling that we cannot actually see.

Ask the group if they can think of any other symbols. You can prompt them with:

- A flag can be a symbol for a whole country, like the United States.
- A button with an arrow pointing up or down can be a symbol on an elevator, a computer

keyboard, or a television remote control. It stands for moving up or moving down.

- A peace sign can be a symbol of the idea that war should end.

If you have brought symbols, show them to the group. Or, you may draw them on newsprint.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — FLAME OF LEARNING, CHALICE OF LOVE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Flame of Learning, Chalice of Love](#)" (included in this document)
- A copy of Leader Resource 1, [Unitarian Service Committee Chalice](#) (included in this document)
- Item(s) with images of the Unitarian Universalist chalice symbol including the two connecting circles
- Optional: Read the story, "[Circles of Light](#)" (included in this document) and/or other background materials.
- Optional: "[Circles of Light](#)" coloring sheet, and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Read and print out the interactive story, "Flame of Learning, Chalice of Love." Be prepared to present the story.
- Print out Leader Resource 1, Unitarian Service Committee Chalice, which shows the original, one-circle chalice symbol of the Unitarian Service Committee.
- Gather items such as a hymnbook, a congregational newsletter, or an order of service that show the Unitarian Universalist chalice symbol with two connecting circles. If you will also do Activity 2: Connecting Circles, keep these items handy to show participants again.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.
- Optional: Read the story, "Circles of Light," and/or other background materials to learn more about the creation of the chalice symbol during World War II. You can find additional resources about the chalice symbol in the Find Out More section of this session.

Description of Activity

In this activity, children explore the importance of the chalice symbol. Although some participants may have already heard the story of the Unitarian Universalist symbol, and you will return to it later in this session if you do Activity 2: Connecting Circles, the story has a special purpose here. Use the story to build children's understanding of symbols of faith — why we need them, and what makes a good symbol.

As children sit in a circle, tell the story slowly, so they have time to put the words they hear into images.

When you finish the story, lead a discussion with these questions:

- Why did the Unitarians need a symbol?
- What are some other reasons it might be useful for a faith community to have a symbol?
- Can you think of other symbols for faith communities? (You may prompt participants by mentioning the Christian cross, the Jewish Star of David, or another faith symbol that you are comfortable explaining accurately and simply.)
- Does a symbol have to always be a picture?
- What did the circle symbolize when the Austrian artist drew the first symbol, during World War II?
- Why do you think a circle is used to show protection? Why is a circle used to show love?

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "Circles of Light" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 2: CONNECTING CIRCLES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Two flashlights of identical size, with new batteries
- Item(s) with images of the Unitarian Universalist chalice symbol including the two overlapping circles

Preparation for Activity

- Gather a hymnbook, congregational newsletter, or order of service to show children the Unitarian Universalist chalice symbol with two overlapping circles. If you have done Activity 1:

Story — Flame of Learning, Chalice of Love, you will have these items on hand.

- Plan how to make your meeting space dark so the children can clearly see the circles formed by two flashlight beams. Consider moving your group to an especially dark room for this activity.

Description of Activity

Using flashlights, the children will explore the importance of the two overlapping circles in the Unitarian Universalist chalice symbol.

If the group heard the story, "Flame of Learning, Chalice of Love" in Activity 1, you can tell them the original drawing of the chalice in a circle was fine for a while. After the Unitarians joined together with the Universalists, some people felt they should have a new symbol that would include everyone and show that the two groups were now one.

You may say:

The Unitarians and the Universalists thought about faith and worship in very similar ways. When these two faith communities decided to join together, the Unitarians already had their own chalice symbol, with one circle around it, which they liked very much.

Show the children the chalice symbol with the overlapping circles by holding up and then passing around the hymnbook and other items you have brought. Ask them to look carefully and see if they can find the way the symbol shows that two groups are together as one group. Prompt them, or tell them, that the circle around the chalice is really two, overlapping circles.

Say, in your own words:

See how the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith has more than one part. Let's look at each of the different parts: the flame, the chalice cup, and the circles. Each part is also a symbol.

The flame stands for spirit. The chalice cup stands for community. Our symbol shows the way community holds and protects the spirit. The two circles stand for our Unitarian and Universalist faith traditions. "Faith traditions" means the things we do as Unitarian Universalists to show how we care about spirit, and community. Unitarian Universalism is a faith where there is more than one way to care about spirit and community.

The chalice being on the side, instead of in the middle, stands for another important idea of Unitarian Universalists: There is always room for more ideas and new ways in our faith.

Explain that they will use flashlights to learn something about circles, but first you will need to turn out the lights. Prepare the children for darkening the room. You might even ask for a volunteer to turn off the lights. If you have decided to relocate to another room that can more easily be darkened, bring the two flashlights and lead participants there now.

Turn the flashlights on. Choose two volunteers to hold the flashlights. You may want to choose two who seem especially fearful of the dark.

Once you have darkened the room, position yourself between the children who are holding the flashlights. Ask them to shine the beams on a wall or the ceiling to show two separate circles. Ask the group to say what they notice about the circles.

Now have the children experiment with putting the flashlight closer to the wall or ceiling, or further away. What happens to the circles? See if the children can figure out how to put one circle inside of the other circle.

Remind the group that the Unitarian Universalist chalice symbol includes two circles that are not one inside the other, but overlapping. Give two other children the flashlights and ask them to try to make the two circles connect in one place. You may choose another pair of participants to try to make the circles connect in two places, so they overlap as they do in the chalice symbol.

Turn on the lights and collect the flashlights. If you are away from your meeting room, lead the group back.

You may wish to ask children what they think about the chalice and overlapping circles as a faith symbol. Allow as much discussion as you have time for; it leads directly into Activity 5: Our Own Faith Symbols.

ACTIVITY 3: "SPIRIT OF LIFE" WRIST SCARF DANCE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Colorful, flowing scarves, for all participants
- Ponytail holders to secure scarves to participants' wrists
- Optional: CD with a version of the song, "Spirit of Life"

Preparation for Activity

- Review "Spirit of Life," Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. If you plan to teach the song, make sure you know the tune. You can hear the song from the [Davies Memorial Unitarian Universalist Church](http://www.daviesmemorialunitarianuniversalistchurch.org) website.
- Collect enough colorful scarves to make at least one wrist scarf for each participant. You may

collect scarves from congregational members, at garage sales, or at dollar stores. Or, you may invite children to bring a colorful, flowing scarf from home. Communicate this request to parents with a handout, in a group email, or in person at least a week before you will do this activity. You may wish to download, customize, and distribute Leader Resource 4: Scarf Request. Always bring extras.

- Purchase covered elastic hair ties that will fit comfortably on a child's wrist, at least one for each participant.
- Optional: If you are supplying the scarves and the hair ties, tie each scarf to a ponytail holder ahead of time to make wrist scarves for the group.
- Optional: Your congregation may have adult or teen members who would excel at teaching the song "Spirit of Life" to participants and/or leading an improvisational dance activity. Invite volunteers to help lead this session well in advance.

Description of Activity

Ask the children to gather in a circle, with their colorful scarves if they have brought them from home. Wrist scarves are easily made by children, if you have not made them ahead of time. Tell the group they will learn the song, "Spirit of Life" — a popular hymn sung in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. Then they will put on wrist scarves to accompany their own singing with improvisational dance.

"Spirit of Life" has become symbolic of Unitarian Universalist faith values of compassion and love. The phrase "Roots hold me close, wings set me free" expresses the power of a home, and the importance of leaving home for journeys. Share these ideas with the children.

First, have participants listen to the song.

Then, teach the words. Sing each phrase of the song and ask the group to sing the phrase back to you. Then, sing two phrases together and ask the group to sing these back to you. Finally, sing the whole song with the group.

Now distribute wrist scarves if you have made them ahead of time, or distribute ponytail holders and help each child tie their scarf to a hair tie. Show the children how to knot a scarf around a hair tie, and then slide a hand into the hair tie to make a wrist scarf. Allow them to experiment with their wrist scarves.

Play the recording of "Spirit of Life," inviting participants to sing along. Or, lead the group in singing "Spirit of Life" together.

Invite the children to dance creatively with their wrist scarves as they sing the song and/or hear the recording. Encourage participants to move and dance to feel and see the energy and color of their wrist scarves.

ACTIVITY 4: OUR OWN FAITH SYMBOLS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1, [My Faith Symbol](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- An assortment of shapes, cut out from Leader Resource 2, [Faith Symbol Shapes](#) (included in this document)
- Pencils and erasers
- Roll of magnetic adhesive tape, and scissors

Preparation for Activity

- Print and photocopy Handout 1, My Faith Symbol, for all participants.
- Print several copies of Leader Resource 2, Faith Symbol Shapes onto heavy card stock for tracing, or onto regular weight paper for photocopying onto heavier paper. Cut out the shapes for children to trace.
- Place tracing shapes, pencils, and erasers on tables where participants will work.
- Review and print out Leader Resource 3, Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Faith for Children.

Description of Activity

Learning to articulate one's beliefs is an important goal of Unitarian Universalist religious education for all ages. In this activity, children create symbols to represent their individual faiths based on simple shapes.

Before asking children to choose or create symbols to represent their faith, first lead a discussion to help them shape a working idea of what faith is. Refer to Leader Resource 3: [Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Faith in Children's Language](#). (included in this document)

Ask the group:

Does anyone know what "faith" means?

Allow some responses, if any are forthcoming. Then tell the children, in these words or your own:

Your faith has to do with the things you believe are true, and the way you try to live your life.

Children your age are not too young to have some ideas about your faith. Today you have a chance to think about some of the things you believe in, and the ways you think it is important to live every day. Then, you will choose or create a symbol for your own, personal faith.

Now say:

Adult Unitarian Universalists agree on a few things we believe and value. Some of these ideas may be part of your faith. Listen carefully and see if there are any you especially agree with.

Slowly read aloud the Principles from Leader Resource 3, pausing after each.

Invite the group:

Does anyone want to mention one of these ideas that sounded pretty good to you? One that is part of what you believe?

Invite discussion.

Arrange participants at worktables and distribute Handout 1, My Faith Symbol. Hold up a blank handout and show the children where they can write their names. Help those who need help. Point out that the middle of the handout is empty. Before they begin tracing and drawing, the children may investigate the shapes on their tables.

Invite them to choose one or more shapes that mean something to them to trace onto their handout. Tell them you will come around to speak with each child individually and will be glad to hear about their faith symbol or help them if they do not yet have an idea about what their faith symbol could be. You may say:

Please choose shapes that remind you of your faith. When I come over to you, be ready to tell me why you picked the shape you picked to be your personal faith symbol. If you are still deciding, I will be glad to help you think about which shapes could be in your faith symbol.

Visit each child. Be sure that on the children's names are on the handouts. Help those who have not written their names. Ask each child to tell you why he/she chose the shape(s) they did for a faith symbol. Print the child's spoken words on the handout, in the space provided at the bottom.

Press a short strip of magnetic tape onto the back of each handout. Invite the children to display their faith symbols on their refrigerators at home.

ACTIVITY 5: CIRCLE ROUND THE CHALICE (5 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you know the tune for either: "London Bridge Is Falling Down" or "Go Round and Round the Village."

Description of Activity

An active singing game helps children experience the connectedness symbolized by the flaming chalice and overlapping circles. Invite participants to stand in a circle and hold hands. Choose one child to sit in the middle of the circle; tell the group that he/she is going to be a symbol of the chalice.

Lead the group in singing one of these short songs. If you prefer the tune to "London Bridge Is Falling Down," teach the group to sing:

Round the chalice we will go,
We will go, we will go.
Round the chalice we will go.
Bound by love.

If you prefer the tune to "Go Round and Round the Village," teach the group to sing:

Go round and round the chalice.
Go round and round the chalice.
Go round and round the chalice.
Our circle has no end.

Direct the participants in the circle to travel counterclockwise around the "chalice" as they sing. Tell them that on the last word of the song, all participants who are walking should quickly sit down. Then, let the "chalice" choose a new participant to sit in the middle.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, bold marker, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the words "chalice" and "symbol" with bold marker on index cards or post-its.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice. Invite the children to take their stones from the labyrinth, place them in the basket, and return to the circle.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The words for our World Wall today are "chalice" and "symbol."

Show the group the index cards or post-its on which you have written "chalice" and "symbol." Post them on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite participants to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,

When our heart is in a holy place.

We are blessed with love and amazing grace.

When our heart is in a holy place.

Say in your own words:

Today we talked about the faith symbols of our Unitarian Universalist faith home. We learned about the chalice and the two, connecting circles surrounding the chalice. We learned an important hymn and we designed our own faith symbols.

Each of you is an important connection in our group circle. I'm glad you were here and I look forward to having you cross the threshold again next time."

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind the children to give the handout to their parents, and dismiss the group.

FAITH IN ACTION: REFUGEES' NEW HOMES — LONG-TERM (45 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Contact a refugee aid association for a list of needed items. Find out what kinds of donations they might accept.
- You may plan to bring the donations yourself. Or, you can arrange for a "delegation" of children to bring them, some weeks down the road. If children will come with you, make an arrangement that is convenient for parents as well as for the refugee aid association. Use your congregation's standard permission form. Secure adult volunteers to help with transportation and supervision as needed.
- Optional: If you are bringing children, try to arrange for someone who works at the refugee aid association to speak with the group about how donations help refugees get settled. Alert your contact at the refugee aid association that the children are studying both the material and the intangible functions a family home serves.
- Post a blank sheet of newsprint.

Description of Activity

Sometimes people need to leave their family home forever. Wars and natural disasters are the most common reasons.

Ask the children if they can think of any situations like that. Some may be aware of the Gulf Coast hurricanes; others may know a family who came to the U.S. from another country because of a war.

Tell the children that people often give money or time to help refugees create new family homes. Ask the group what they think a refugee family might need for their new home. You may want to remind them about the importance of a threshold, if they have investigated thresholds in Session 1. Maybe a family would like something to decorate the threshold of their new home.

List the children's suggestions on the newsprint. You need not write down every idea, but be sure to thank all contributors for their ideas.

Complete the list with information you have obtained about the donations a refugee aid association will welcome. Compare with the brainstorm. What needed items surprise participants?

Make a plan for collecting items to provide to the refugee organization. If you have created a permission slip and/or a request for parent volunteers, distribute these now.

See Session 3, Faith in Action: Refugees' New Homes for next steps in implementing this long-term activity.

FAITH IN ACTION: HOMELESS PEOPLE'S NEEDS – SHORT-TERM (45 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Personal care items donated for homeless people
- Locking plastic bags

Preparation for Activity

- Contact a local agency that serves homeless adults or families and offer to donate a number of personal care kits. Find out what kinds of donations the agency would like.
- Invite parents, other congregants, and/or a local hotel to donate new (unused) personal care items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap packets, wash cloths, small tissue packages, and bottles of shampoo or skin lotion.
- Purchase locking plastic bags large enough to hold the items each child will combine to make a personal care kit for a homeless person.

Description of Activity

Children will internalize the chalice story by participating in a Faith in Action project to help homeless people, who are refugees in our own country. This special population needs care, concern, and practical help to find the everyday comforts of home without a permanent place to live.

Arrange for the children to make personal care kits to distribute at an agency that serves homeless adults or families. Children can bring new, unused tooth brushes, soap packets, and other items to include in the bags. Add these to items you have secured from local hotels' housekeeping departments.

Children can sort the donated items – toothpaste, shampoo, etc. – and then package a variety of items into each plastic bag. You can have children make an assembly line and pass each bag around, or allow each

child to carry a bag around the circle to select items for one bag at a time.

You may like to have the children draw pictures to include in the bags. Adults should deliver the personal care bags to the homeless agency.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

When you prepared yourself spiritually for this session you asked yourself several questions about the children in the group. Think now about what you learned within the sacred circle these children represent. How can what you learned help you to teach better in the next session, when you will learn about bee communities together? How are you building new friendships, new relationships with parents, and new understandings about our Unitarian Universalist faith home?

TAKING IT HOME

We see in the world around us many symbols that teach us the meaning of life. You could notice if you wanted to, but you are usually too busy. We Indians live in a world of symbols and images where the spiritual and the commonplace are one. – John Fire/Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes in the book Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

We explored together what a symbol is, and experienced ritual involving two symbols of our Unitarian Universalist faith: the flaming chalice and the song "Spirit of Life." We created faith symbols of our own, and danced to "Spirit of Life" as ways of deepening our connection with our UU faith home.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

This week our class expanded our discussion of home by talking about symbols of our faith home. But our homes themselves can be symbols of what is important to us. As a family, look around your house and ask "What does our home say about us and what we like? What would someone looking at our house think was important to our family?"

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Game

Symbols for everyone! To play a fun game involving symbols, have your family sit in a circle. Each person should come up with a gesture to symbolize themselves. This gesture might represent something they like to do, a personal value such as kindness or a personal characteristic such as long hair. Once everyone has created a symbol, have one person begin by doing his/her symbol and then the symbol of another family

member. The person “named” by their symbolic gesture does their symbol and then another person’s, etc. Try to keep the game going as quickly and smoothly as possible, moving from one person’s gesture to the next.

A Family Ritual

Faith home meets family home. Try a week of evening rituals related to chalice-lighting. You can use a chalice, a candle, an LED/battery-operated chalice light, or the stained glass chalice your child made in this session. Use any words you like as a blessing as you light the chalice. You may like to use these words, which your child heard during the chalice-making activity:

The chalice is a symbol of the Unitarian Universalist tradition. It is a symbol for love, freedom, community, and light.

You may wish to help your child light the chalice themselves.

Include some discussion each evening about the roles faith and your faith home play in your family life. Here are some questions you may use. There is one for each day:

Day 1 – What is our faith home and why do we attend there?

Day 2 – How is our faith home connected to our family home?

Day 3 –Where do we see circles in the world? What do the circles mean?

Day 4 – Why is the flaming chalice a symbol of our faith home?

Day 5 – What might be a personal faith symbol for each of us?

Day 6 – How can we, as Unitarian Universalists, make a difference in the world?

Day 7 – Where do we learn the most about our faith community?

FAMILY DISCOVERY

The flaming chalice. For an account of the Unitarian Service Committee’s creation of the flaming chalice symbol during World War II, read the story, “Circles of Light,” adapted from a story in [A Lamp in Every Corner: A Unitarian Universalist Storybook](#) by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004). A religious educator in Maryland, Grohsmeyer offers 21 stories in her book that communicate about Unitarian Universalism in a lively way for learners of all ages, along with suggestions for the novice storyteller.

A [pamphlet by Dan Hotchkiss](#), available from the Unitarian Universalist Association online bookstore, tells the history of the flaming chalice symbol.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WAX-RESISTANT CHALICE PAINTING (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- [Chalice Art](#)
- An assortment of color, wax crayons for participants to share
- Blue, water-based paint for participants to share
- Paintbrushes for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Print out and photocopy a few different chalices large enough to manipulate easily.
- Set up worktables with crayons and paint for participants to share.

Description of Activity

The chalice symbols used by Unitarian Universalist congregations are line drawings that participants can individualize with color. Gather participants at worktables and distribute the photocopies you have made of one or both of these chalice illustrations.

Tell the group:

You can use the chalice drawing to create a symbol of your faith home, our Unitarian Universalist congregation. You can bring this symbol to your family home, at the end of our session today.

Invite participants to color hard with different colored crayons in each part of the chalice illustration (but not so hard as to tear the paper). As participants color, remind them that each part of the chalice picture is important to the whole faith symbol. Identify the two circles in the painting, the flame, and the chalice itself.

When the whole picture is colored, ask children to paint over the whole page with blue tempera paint. The results will be a beautiful unique chalice painting that tells the story of the faith symbol.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: STAINED GLASS CHALICE (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- White glue
- Water
- Colored tissue paper
- Disposable paintbrushes for participants to share

- 18" pipe cleaners in different colors
- Scissors
- Pyrex® custard cups or other wide-mouthed, heat-resistant vessels, approximately one-cup size, for all participants
- Old newspaper
- Optional: Votive or tea candles for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Mix white glue and water mixture — two parts glue to one part water — in small food storage containers.
- Cut colored tissue into small squares.
- Cover work tables with newspaper.
- Optional: Twist individual pipe cleaners into circle shapes, two for each participant

Description of Activity

Tell participants they will construct a chalice — a symbol of their faith home, your Unitarian Universalist congregation that they can take with them to use in their family homes. You may say:

The chalice is a symbol of the Unitarian Universalist tradition. It is a symbol for love, freedom, community, and light.

Distribute glue mixture, Pyrex or heat-resistant cups, squares of colored tissue, paint brushes, and pipe cleaners in assorted colors to participants at their work tables.

Invite the children to lightly brush some glue on their individual cups, and begin adding pieces of tissue paper. They may add as many layers of tissue paper as they wish. As participants layer the colors, a stained glass effect will appear. Demonstrate for participants how to brush a layer of glue mixture over each new layer of tissue to smooth it. If you are using measuring cups with red gradient lines, three layers of tissue paper will cover the red lines.

Chalices will dry in about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, help the children each make two circles with 18-inch colored pipe cleaners. Allow participants to choose the colors they wish to use, and ask them to explain why they chose those colors. Tell the children they may add their two circles anywhere around the chalice as long as the circles are connected to each other and to the chalice.

You may wish to give each child a votive or tea light candle to take home with his/her chalice. If you have suggested a chalice-lighting ritual and safety practices in your Taking It Home section to help families use the

chalice with their children, remind children to share the handout with their parents.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CIRCLE CONNECT US (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Colored paper, cut into strips
- Tape or glue for fastening each strip into a closed ring
- Scissors, if participants will cut more paper
- Optional: Markers or crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Cut colored paper into strips about one inch wide and eight inches long

Description of Activity

Children connect circles by making paper chains. This activity reinforces the meaning of two connecting circles of the chalice symbol.

Show the children how to make the first circle and then how to connect the circles and make a chain. Distribute paper and tape or glue.

While participants work, tell them that the chains they are making can be a faith symbol. Just as the two overlapping circles on the chalice symbol represent the Unitarians and the Universalists joining together as a single community of faith, these paper chains symbolize how in Creating Home we come together and create our community of faith.

Point out that the paper chain the children are making is a symbol. You may want to ask them what they think it stands for. Encourage responses. Tell them that the paper chain could be a symbol for the way the group is made up of many different people. Invite them to elaborate on that idea, or offer other ideas.

Invite children to write their own names on the pieces of paper, or decorate the paper with their faith symbols (if you have done Activity 4, Our Own Faith Symbols, and have the tracing materials handy) before adding the paper links to the chain.

Some participants will want to do nothing else but make paper chains. Use the chains to decorate your meeting space, or allow participants to take their chains home.

STORY: CIRCLES OF LIGHT

Janeen K. Grohsmeyer, adapted from the story, "Circles of Light: The Flaming Chalice"

In the dark nights and the darker days of World War II, guns blazed all over Europe and airplanes dropped death from the sky. Many people tried to escape from the war. These people were called refugees.

Some Unitarians in the United States decided to help the refugees and formed the Unitarian Service Committee. The committee members went to Europe to try to bring refugees safely out of the war. But the refugees came from many different countries. They spoke many different languages, like German, or Yiddish, or French, or Italian, or Polish, or Hungarian. Most of the refugees did not speak English. Most of the Unitarian committee members spoke only English. How could the Unitarians explain they were there to help? It was difficult for the refugees to understand them.

Dr. Charles Joy was in charge of the committee. He knew that the Unitarians needed a symbol everyone could recognize, no matter what language they spoke. It would have to be a picture, a symbol with no words. That way, anyone could understand the message: "We are here to help you."

Dr. Joy asked an artist named Hans Deutsch for help. Maybe an artist could draw the right kind of picture that could be a symbol for the Unitarians. The two men met in Portugal. Mr. Deutsch understood why a picture would be helpful. He had come from Austria. But now he was a refugee, because of the war. In Portugal, people speak Portuguese. Mr. Deutsch was used to speaking German.

Mr. Deutsch made a drawing of a chalice with a flame, surrounded by a circle. He showed it to Dr. Joy. The symbol really worked. Soon refugees all over Europe began to see this symbol wherever the Unitarian Service Committee went to find and help them. When refugees saw the picture of a chalice, a flame, and a circle around the chalice that looked like it was protecting it, they knew they could trust the committee members. They did not need to speak English, or even know how to read, to understand the symbol. The picture gave the message of hope, freedom, and love that the refugees were looking for.

After the war was over, Unitarians began using the flaming chalice and its circle as a symbol in worship. Later, the Universalists joined the Unitarians to form the Unitarian Universalist Association and people started to draw the symbol with two circles, instead of one. One circle is for the Unitarians and one circle is for the Universalists. The circles are so close together that they overlap. The circles are connected, just as Unitarian Universalists believe that all of us are connected to one another.

The chalice is not in the exact middle of the circle. It is almost like the chalice has moved over to let something else come into the circle. This reminds us that as Unitarian Universalists, we always leave room for other ideas and other ways. There is always room for more in Unitarian Universalism.

We, as Unitarian Universalists, have all kinds of chalices. We light a chalice on Sunday morning in worship, and at other times when we gather in our faith home together. Some family homes use chalices during meals or on special occasions. Chalices come in lots of different shapes, sizes, and colors, just like Unitarian Universalists.

The flaming chalice is a faith symbol for the Unitarian Universalists. It is a symbol of learning, caring, and love. It is a symbol of hope, freedom, and light. It is our faith home symbol.

STORY: FLAME OF LEARNING, CHALICE OF LOVE

Janeen Grohsmeyer

(Light a chalice, if there isn't already one lit, and have some matches at hand.)

Have you ever watched a candle burn?

(Lean forward to impart the secret.)

The fire is alive.

Watch it! It moves. It flickers. It dances on the wind. It changes with every breath of air. (Demonstrate this.)

Fire is alive. It is born. It grows. And it dies.

(Blow out candle.)

But fire is special. It can live again and again.

(Relight candle and reverently set the chalice someplace where participants can see it.)

People have always known that fire was special. Long, long ago, before people made matches or candles or even made houses, people knew that fire was special. There was the great fire in the sky, the sun, which made the earth warm and made night into day. And there were the smaller fires that people made, fires that cooked their food, and kept them warm, and brought them light.

People honored the fires, because fire was special. Fire was more than human.

Fire has power. It can create, and it can destroy. It can bring light, and it can burn. It can create, and it can destroy. Fire can be wonderful, and fire can be terrible. We have to be careful with fire.

And so, people thought that fire was something sacred and holy. Some people even worshiped fire, and said that fire was a deity, like a goddess or a god. Other people said fire wasn't actually the deity, but just meant that the deity was there.

No matter what they believed, people all over the world gave fire a special place in their religions. They had fires in their homes, of course, to cook food and keep warm, and they also had sacred fires in their temples. They set sacred lamps on their altars. They lit sacred bonfires outside on the hilltops and in the groves. They placed sacred torches near the graves of those who died.

We still do this today. In Washington, DC, near the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, burns an eternal flame that never goes out. In churches at Christmas time, many Christians light four candles on an Advent wreath. During the eight days of Hanukkah, Jews light the eight

candles of the menorah. At Diwali, Hindus set small lamps all around the house.

And when Unitarian Universalists gather, we light a chalice. This is our sacred fire. The flame gives light and warmth, just like all fires. It's also a symbol, something we use to represent the light of learning.

The chalice is a symbol, too. A chalice is really just a big cup that you can drink from. When you're thirsty, the nicest thing someone can do is to give you something to drink. Giving a drink to someone is a way of welcoming them to your house. In a way, it means you're part of the same family, just like everyone here is part of the same family, the Unitarian Universalist family.

The picture of a flame in a chalice was first drawn by a man named Hans Deutsch during World War II for the Unitarian Service Committee. This was before your parents were born. During the war, the committee needed a symbol to show refugees from many different countries that they were there to help them. When refugees saw the picture of the flame in the chalice, it didn't matter what language they spoke. They understood that the symbol stood for help. Unitarian Universalists started to use the flaming chalice in their worship services after that.

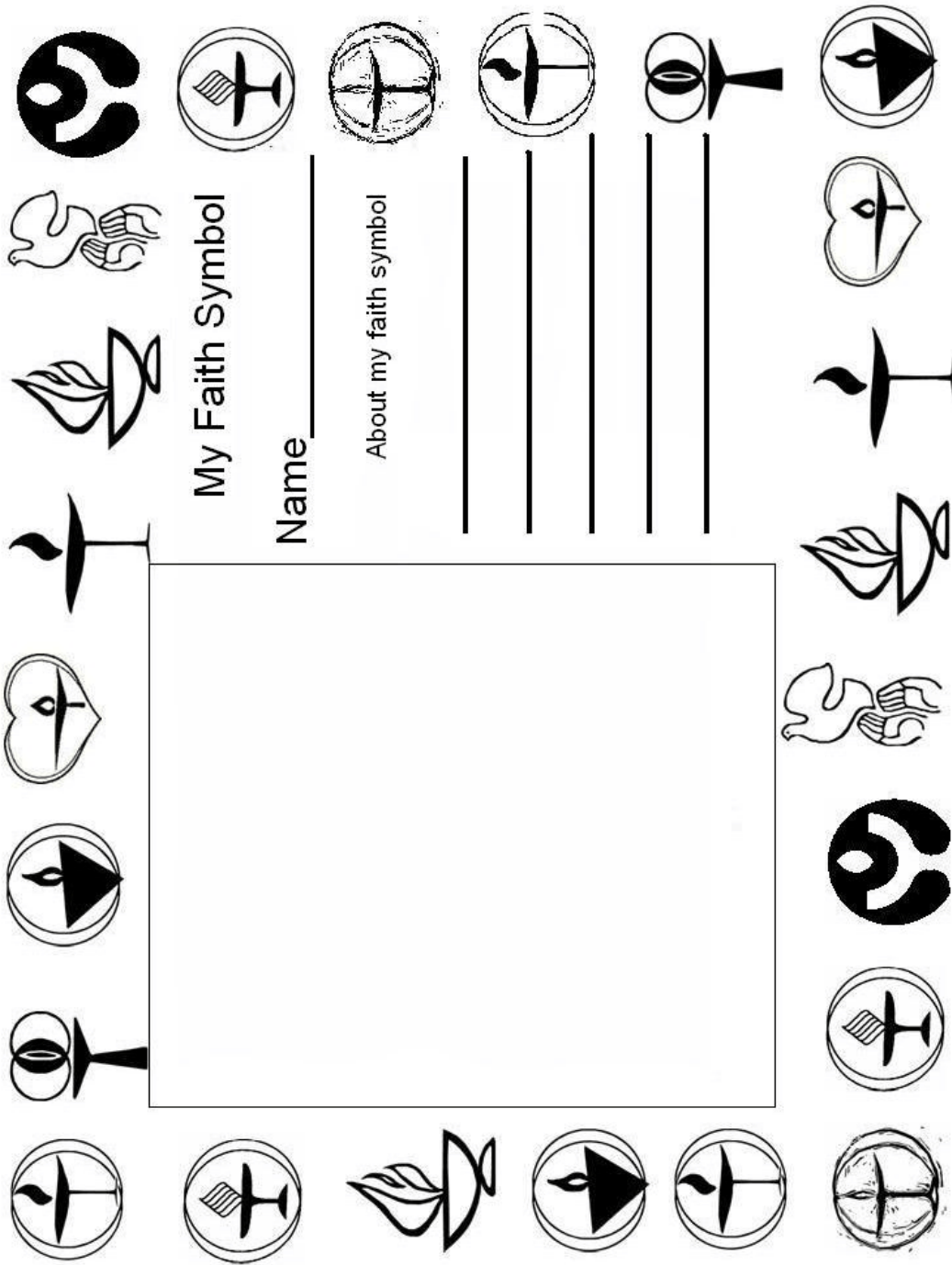
Just like the sacred fires, people have used chalices in their religions for thousands and thousands of years. Long ago, the Greeks and Romans put wine in their chalices. Other people have put water or blood or milk, or even melted butter in their chalices. The Celts believed that drinking from the cauldron of the Goddess Ceirdwyn would bring people back to life. Jesus shared a cup of wine with his friends. Many Christians still do this in religious celebrations today.

We Unitarian Universalists don't drink from our chalice. Instead, we use it to hold the flame. The circle of the chalice helps keep the fire small. The flame doesn't blind us. It doesn't burn us. It gives us light, so we can see all the different things in the universe. Even the invisible ones, because the Unitarian Universalist flame is a light of learning.

The circle of our family keeps us warm, both our family at home and our Unitarian Universalist family. We help each other, and we share food and drink with each other, and we take care of each other, because that's what families are supposed to do. And we invite everyone to come be a part of our family, because the Unitarian Universalist chalice is a chalice of love.

The flaming chalice is a symbol of learning and of love. It's our symbol, the symbol of Unitarian Universalism.

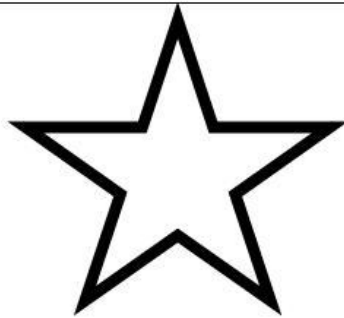
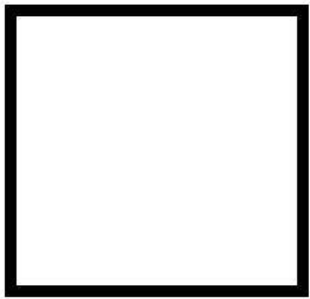
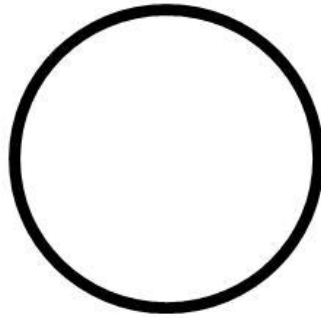
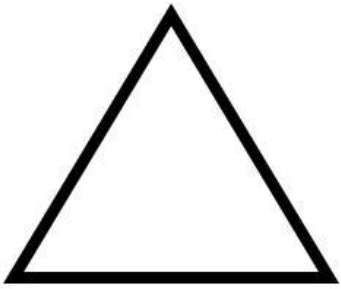
HANDOUT 1: MY FAITH SYMBOL



LEADER RESOURCE 1: UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE CHALICE



LEADER RESOURCE 2: FAITH SYMBOL SHAPES



LEADER RESOURCE 3: UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PRINCIPLES IN CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE

Unitarian Universalist Principles in Children's Language

Use these versions of the Principles to guide a discussion about faith as children prepare to create their own faith symbols in Session 2, Activity 5:

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

LEADER RESOURCE 4: SCARF REQUEST

Dear Parents,

When Creating Home meets on [insert day, date], the children will learn the song “Spirit of Life,” Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, and improvise a dance to the song with wrist scarves which we will assemble during the session.

If you have a colorful, flowing scarf at home that your child can use to make a wrist scarf, please allow your child to bring the scarf on [date].

Thank you,

[Co-leaders]

FIND OUT MORE

The Flaming Chalice

For a more detailed account of the Unitarian Service Committee's creation of the flaming chalice symbol during World War II, read the story, "Circles of Light," adapted from a story in [A Lamp in Every Corner: A Unitarian Universalist Storybook](#) by Janeen K. Grohsmeyer (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004). A religious educator in Maryland, Grohsmeyer offers 21 stories that communicate about Unitarian Universalism in a lively way for learners of all ages, along with suggestions for the novice storyteller.

A [pamphlet by Dan Hotchkiss](#), available from the Unitarian Universalist Association online bookstore, tells the history of the flaming chalice symbol.

For information about the sacred circle as a symbol in faith traditions other than Unitarian Universalism, check these links:

A website about [Tibetan Buddhism and the mandala](#) symbol

A [description of circles](#) at the Drexel University "Math Forum" website

The Call by David Spangler (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996) may be a good read for you to explore your own Unitarian Universalist identity. This short book about the intellectual, spiritual, and emotional values that inform our personal choices may illuminate your relationship with your Unitarian Universalist faith home and deepen your understanding of why you have chosen and continue to choose it.

SESSION 3: BEEHIVE

INTRODUCTION

The keeping of bees is like the direction of sunbeams. — Henry David Thoreau

This session focuses on the family home through an investigation of bees and their homes. The activities explore the idea of home as a specific, physical place that plays a role in the lives of bees. Children will discover commonalities shared by the homes of bees, the homes of other animals, and our family homes. You may find that many children already know some things about bees. Look for opportunities to invite them to build upon the knowledge they have.

The world of the beehive is highly structured. Individual community members have specific responsibilities that relate to the group's survival and the maintenance of their "home." Participants will explore the roles and responsibilities of the different members of a bee community. Then, they will compare the functions of the hive and the roles of its inhabitants to the functions of their own homes and the roles different people play in their families. The understanding participants gain in this session will prepare them, too, for future sessions that draw parallels between family homes and faith homes. Participants will encounter the interesting roles within the "family" of bees sharing a hive, the wonder of a geometrically perfect honeycomb, and possibly the sweet taste of honey, adding up to a positive, safe experience with bees.

In Activity 3: What Bees Do at Home you will present a factual story about how bees live and work together in and around the beehive. The story includes opportunities for the children to move creatively and suggests questions you can ask the group to ensure that the children remain engaged. Reading the story ahead of time will help you get comfortable presenting the information in your own words, in your own way.

If you want deeper information about bees than the story provides, read Leader Resource 1, [Background on Bees and Beehives](#) (included in this document). To enrich this session, begin ahead of time collecting images of bees from magazines, calendars, and books to show the children during this activity; see "Leader Resources" for sources.

This session involves the children in making paper bees to enhance a poster of a beehive for the meeting space. Find the poster, designed to be printed as a single 11x17" sheet, in the Resources section (Leader Resource 2, Beehive Poster). If your meeting space cannot accommodate the poster, cut out the hive from the poster and find a place for it on a wall so the children

can see it throughout this session. After the children make their paper bees, you can "send the bees home" by taping them along the wall in the vicinity of the beehive.

Before this session, ask the parents of all participants about allergies, particularly to honey or bees. Parents who are strictly vegan may not want their children to eat honey. Although no actual bees are used in the session, it will be helpful for you to know ahead of time if the group includes a child who has a fear of bees.

GOALS

This session will:

- Affirm that home can be a particular place
- Help participants understand that all homes exist to fill the needs of the inhabitants
- Encourage participants to find meaningful correlations between human homes and the homes of other animals

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify the hive as a home for bees where each bee has an important role
- Compare and contrast human homes and other animal homes
- Understand and name some of the functions homes serve
- Optional: Manipulate and taste honey, a product of beehive activity

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Introducing Beehives	5
Activity 2: Beehive Poster Preparation	10
Activity 3: Story — What Bees Do at Home	15
Activity 4: Sending the Bees Home	5
Activity 5: Honey Parfaits	15
Faith In Action: Nature Walk — Short-term	10
Faith In Action: Heifer Project International — Long-term	10
Closing	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

This session will focus on beehives. Sometimes hives are portrayed as a frenzy of activity. This session, though, looks at the amazing organization of the colony of bees and how each bee plays a role in the beehive home.

Take a moment and reflect upon this faith setting. Sometimes it probably feels like a buzz of activity. Think about times when it feels like that for you. Does that feel exciting? Overwhelming? Now think about times when it feels less busy, quieter, perhaps less lively. How does that feel to you?

Children are also sensitive to the atmosphere around them. They like to know they have a place in the buzz of activity. How do you like to shape the "feel" of your meeting space? Think about moments when you have felt most at home with children—and when children seem most at home—in this faith setting. Be intentional about establishing the tone you want for this session.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- On top of the labyrinth, place the basket of stones.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. The labyrinth should be spread on the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand if needed.

Be aware that some children may not have chosen a name stone and will need to do that now. Always have extra stones so you can offer the newcomers and any guests a chance to be part of the ritual. Being welcoming in this way models the ritual of hospitality the group will formally explore in Session 12: John Murray.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to say with you:

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

Direct the group's attention to your Word Wall, if you have one. Remind the children of the words you have posted on the Word Wall. Ask whether any remember what the words mean. It is not important to clarify definitions at this time.

Tell the children that one at a time, they may place their stones upon the labyrinth. Say, in your own words:

This labyrinth reminds us that we are taking a journey together. Every session is yet another portion of that journey. Each time we meet, each

person will be asked to place their name stone on the labyrinth. Each stone is a symbol that we are together in this Creating Home community.

When you place your stone, please say your name and share any joys or concerns you have had since we last met. Joys are the things that make you feel happy and concerns are worries. Sharing our joys and concerns with each other is a tradition in our faith community.

Invite the children to come up, one at a time, to place their stone on the labyrinth, say their name, and voice any joys and concerns. You may need to encourage each individual until the group gets used to this opening ritual. When all have placed their name stones on the labyrinth, affirm, "It is very good to be together."

Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCING BEEHIVES (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Beehive Poster](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Leader Resource 1, [Background on Bees and Beehives](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Review the rhyme and the hand movements that accompany the rhyme so you will be comfortable leading this activity.
- Optional: If you would like to know more about bees before leading this session, read Leader Resource 1, Background on Bees and Beehives. Optional: Review the story, "Aesop's Fable of the Worker Bee, the Drone, and the Wasp." If you have time and think the group might enjoy it in addition to the rhyme and hand movements, use Alternate Activity 1: Story — Aesop's Fable of the Worker Bee, the Drone, and the Wasp directly after this activity.

Description of Activity

Show children Leader Resource 2, Beehive Poster, the poster you will use to decorate your meeting space. Identify the beehive on the poster.

Say in your own words:

Today we will learn about the animal that lives in this home. Do you know what it is? That's right: bees. Our poster shows the home, the beehive. But where are the bees?

Recite this rhyme to the children and perform the hand movements indicated:

Here is the beehive (Raise your closed fist with the back of your hand to the children.)

Where are the bees?

Hidden inside where nobody sees.

Now they come creeping out of the hive. (Slowly begin to unfold your hand.)

One, two, three, four, five... (Quickly pop up one finger for each number.)

Buzzzzzzzz! (Move your fingers to imitate bees flying.)

Teach the rhyme, line by line, without the movement. Ask the children to repeat the words after you say each line.

Then ask them to follow your hand motions as you repeat each line, with the movement. Finally, lead the group in saying all the lines together with the movement.

If you have decided to present Alternate Activity 1: Story — [Aesop's Fable of the Worker Bee, the Drone, and the Wasp](#) (included in this document), invite the children to hear you tell the story now. See Alternate Activity 1 for questions to guide a follow-up discussion.

ACTIVITY 2: BEEHIVE POSTER PREPARATION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Beehive Poster](#) (included in this document)
- Copies of Handout 1, [Bee Body Parts](#) (included in this document) for all participants and one for demonstration
- Glue sticks
- Yellow highlighter marker(s)
- Optional: Scissors (including left-handed scissors)

Preparation for Activity

- Download, print, and photocopy Handout 1, Bee Body Parts.
- Decide whether the group has the motor skills necessary, and your session has the time, for each child to cut out the bee body, head, stripes, and wings from Handout 1, Bee Body Parts. You might want to cut out all the pieces

ahead of time. Or, if you will have assistants to help children with the cutting during the session, you might cut out the smaller pieces (stripes and wings) and leave the bodies and heads for the children to cut out themselves, with adult or teen help.

- Cut out, arrange, and glue a bee to show the group one way the bees can look.

Description of Activity

Doing a hands-on activity, children will learn to identify the hive as a home for bees.

Gather the children at worktables. Distribute Handout 1, Bee Body Parts and/or the parts you have already cut out, along with glue sticks and, if children will be cutting, scissors.

Show the children the poster again. Point out that the poster's beehive, and say you need their help to find the bees that live there. Tell the children they may each make a bee for the poster.

Show them your completed bee as one example of how the body parts could be put together. Distribute Handout 1, Bee Body Parts, scissors, and glue. If you have cut out the pieces earlier, let each child pick a body part piece and a head and glue them together. Help the children draw yellow stripes on their bees with the highlighter marker and glue on the bees' wings.

Allow children to be creative when cutting out the body parts and putting them together — it is not necessary for all the bees to look alike.

As children finish their bees, set the bees aside to dry. Allow children whose bees are not finished to continue working while you begin Activity 3: What Bees Do at Home.

ACTIVITY 3: STORY — WHAT BEES DO AT HOME (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Images of bees and beehives
- A copy of story, ["What Bees Do at Home"](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 2, [Beehive Poster](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Collect photographs of bees and beehives to show to your group. Good sources are nature magazines, websites, and books for children about bees; see "Leader Resources" for suggestions.

- Review, download, and print the story, "What Bees Do at Home." Practice reading the story aloud so you will be able to present it effectively.

Description of Activity

Children will learn about the beehive community and connect the beehive with the broader theme of "home" as you present an interactive, factual story that describes what bees do at "home."

Gather children in a circle. Invite them to share what they know about bees. Uncovering what children already know is an important part of this process. They may tell you that bees make honey, and that bees collect pollen and nectar from flowers. If they mention that bees sting, let them know that not all bees sting and that bees sting only to protect themselves.

Affirm that the children already know a good deal about bees. Tell them that now you want to talk about the bee's home, or "beehive." Indicate the beehive on Leader Resource 2, Beehive Poster. Show and pass around the photographs that you have collected of bees and beehives.

The provided story, "What Bees Do at Home" includes prompts for asking the children to demonstrate behaviors you talk about, such as how bees eat or sleep. This allows the children to move around and interact with the story. Make sure participants have enough room to move. You may find other places to add movement, too.

You can also keep children involved by asking questions. Many are suggested in the text of the story.

If you are more comfortable telling what bees do at home in your own words, feel free to do so. Gauge the group's attention span, and pick and choose the information you will share. The story's purpose here is to introduce the beehive community to children in an engaging way, in order to help them relate beehive life to the broad theme of "home."

If the children will do Activity 4: Sending the Bees Home, make sure you end this activity with a discussion of things bees might do "at home."

ACTIVITY 4: SENDING THE BEES HOME (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Beehive Poster](#) (included in this document)
- Paper bees that children made in Activity 2: [Beehive Poster Preparation](#) (included in this document)
- Double-sided tape

- Marker

Preparation for Activity

- Children will need the paper bees they each made in Activity 2: Beehive Poster Preparation.
- If the children have not done Activity 3: What Bees Do at Home, be ready to prompt them with some information about bees and beehives to help them suggest some things bees do at home.

Description of Activity

Start by saying:

Let's take the bees we made and send them back to their hive. Can we name a reason why each bee might be returning home as we attach our bees to our poster? What were some of the things bees do at home that we heard in the story?

To reinforce their knowledge of the functions of a home, prompt the children as needed to guide them toward naming these reasons a bee might return to the hive:

- To bring food
- To eat
- To store food
- To sleep or rest
- To care for the young
- To care for the elderly
- To find shelter (from rain, storms, heat and cold)
- To be together (with other bees)

As each child tells why their bee is returning home, write a one- or two-word description of the reason on the stripe of the bee. Children may be opinionated about what "their" bee's reason for returning home will be; try to honor their preferences.

Attach the bees to the beehive poster with double-sided tape or another way that will make the bees easy to remove for later reference.

Including All Participants

If new participants have joined the group for this session, you may wish to provide them with a name stone and materials to decorate it before this activity; they can decorate their name stones while you add paper bees to the hive poster.

ACTIVITY 5: HONEY PARFAITS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of Leader Resource 3, [Honey Parfaits](#) (included in this document)
- Clear plastic glasses or parfait cups for all participants
- Spoons and butter knives for all participants
- Ingredients specified in Leader Resource 3, Honey Parfaits or required for your adaptation of the recipe
- Utensils for preparing and distributing ingredients
- Napkins and/or paper plates
- Optional: Hand sanitizer
- Optional: A honeycomb, real or plastic

Preparation for Activity

- Review and print out Leader Resource 3, Honey Parfaits.
- Optional: If you have participants who are allergic to honey or another ingredient, or vegan participants who do not eat animal products, adapt the recipe as needed.
- Gather ingredients specified in the honey parfait recipe or required for your adaptation of the recipe.
- Gather clear plastic cups, spoons, and butter knives for all participants; a knife to slice bananas; and larger spoons to distribute the honey, granola, and yogurt or pudding, or other ingredients.
- Optional: Obtain a real or plastic honeycomb.

Description of Activity

Gather the children at tables where they can prepare and eat their honey parfaits. In this activity, they will have an opportunity to manipulate and taste honey, a product of beehive activity.

Share the following with the children, in your own words. If you have a honeycomb, use it to illustrate:

In nature, bees build their own beehives. Bees can decide for themselves where to build their home. Some hives are built in trees. Some hives are built underground.

Some people build boxes or other structures and then add the bees. Then, the bees build their

hives inside the boxes. After a while, the bees produce honey and the people gather some of the honey to eat and sometimes to sell. This is called beekeeping. People have been beekeeping at least as far back in time as ancient Egypt. Bees are the only insects that produce something people eat.

Even though beekeepers set up boxes and places for bees to build hives, some bees still fly away and build their hives in the wild. Some hives are built in trees. Some hives are built underground.

Not all bees make honey. Of the 20,000 species of bees, only about six or seven kinds of bees are honeybees. Bees store honey in the small cells of the honeycomb. People collect the honey from these cells.

Invite the children to taste some honey. Hand each child a spoon and let them take a small bit of honey to taste. If some are allergic to or do not eat honey, tell them that although they cannot taste the honey, they can still create a parfait.

Ask if anyone has had a parfait before. Explain that a parfait is something to eat, usually a dessert, which is made with layers of different ingredients.

Tell the children they will be making a honey parfait. Invite them to wash their hands, or pass around small bottles of hand sanitizer, while you distribute a napkin or paper plate, a half banana, a spoon, a butter knife, and a parfait glass or plastic cup to each child. Include yourself or your co-leader, so an adult can demonstrate how to make the honey parfait.

Once all have washed their hands, demonstrate how to make the parfait. Assist individuals as needed. Invite the children to eat their parfaits, and clean up.

Including All Participants

Make sure you know which children cannot eat honey or other ingredients. Adapt the parfait recipe accordingly or provide these children with alternate ingredients.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, bold marker, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the word "beehive" with bold marker on an index card or post-it.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Tell that the children it is now time to share a closing ritual to mark the end of your religious education time together for this session.

Relight the chalice. Invite the children to take their name stones from the labyrinth, place them in the basket, and return to the circle. Then, ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite participants to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,
When our heart is in a holy place.
We are blessed with love and amazing grace.
When our heart is in a holy place.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The word for our Word Wall today is "beehive."

Show the group the index card or post-it on which you have written "beehive." Post it on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Say in your own words:

Now it is time to buzz home, but I hope you'll come back next time, when we'll talk about the homes of other animals. Do you think we will find many similarities between the homes of other animals and our own homes? We'll see.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout you have prepared. Remind the children to give the handout to their parents, and dismiss the group.

FAITH IN ACTION: NATURE WALK — SHORT-TERM (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have enough adult supervision and the permission of parents and congregational leaders to bring the group outdoors, especially if you plan to leave the grounds of your meeting location.

Description of Activity

Learning about bees and their complex beehive life helps children understand that all creatures have and create homes. Unitarian Universalists affirm that we are part of an interdependent web of life. Noticing and honoring the homes of all creatures is a small act of faith.

Tell the group that you are going to take a walk outside the building and look for insect or animal homes. Ask them to put on any outdoor clothing they need.

Once you are outdoors, share this message with children or use your own words:

All homes are important and all creatures deserve to have a home. As Unitarian Universalists we believe that all creatures have a right to a home. We should try not to harm or destroy another animal's home if it does not pose a threat to us. This includes beehives, anthills, birds' nests and other homes.

If we come across a beehive in the wild, remember that this is the home of a living creature. It deserves to be treated with respect. We should not disturb the hive or the bees around it.

Invite the children to look for signs of animal homes. Suggest they look for anthills on the ground, a hole in a tree that might be a doorway into a home for squirrels or burrowing insects, bird nests, or signs of other animal homes they are likely to find in the area where you are walking.

You may wish to have them walk in pairs or groups of three. Tell children where and how far they may walk, and be sure that all are within sight of an adult at all times.

Before it is time to go inside, gather the group together. Invite volunteers to report what they saw.

FAITH IN ACTION: HEIFER PROJECT INTERNATIONAL – LONG-TERM (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Visit [Heifer International](#) online to learn about its projects, its educational resources, and how fundraising by the children in Creating Home, their families, and other members of your congregation can help.
- Read about Heifer International's partnership with a local beekeepers' cooperative in Honduras on the Heifer International [website](#).

Description of Activity

If your congregation has ever donated to Heifer International, or, if you are looking for a service project to broaden the group's exploration of "home," share this information with the children and gauge their interest:

Heifer International is an agency that strives to end poverty and world hunger. It particularly supports programs that provide both food and economic resources to improve the quality of life for families around the world. In several countries, Heifer sponsors beekeeping projects by providing start-up money for villages to purchase bees, bee boxes, and the equipment needed to collect and process honey to sell. Two such projects are located in Honduras, where local beekeepers are actively trying to bring back the stingless Honduran honeybee from near extinction. With these projects, then, Heifer is not only helping the families involved but also helping to preserve the natural ecosystem in this Central American country.

FAITH IN ACTION: REFUGEES' NEW HOMES – LONG-TERM (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Boxes or large bags to organize and transport items
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Paper and pencils or markers for all participants
- Optional: A large, 11 x 17" sheet of construction paper for making a group card

Preparation for Activity

- Prepare a station in your meeting space where children can place their donations.
- Optional: Post a sheet of blank newsprint

Description of Activity

This Faith in Action activity was introduced in Session 2: Symbols of Faith. If children have brought items to

donate to a refugee aid association, today you can organize and package the donations.

You may wish to lead children in writing a group note, or individual notes, to accompany their donations. You can distribute paper and pencils or markers, and assist children in drawing or writing a message of welcome and/or peace. You may wish to use a page of blank newsprint to write the word "Welcome" for children to copy onto their own pages.

Or, you can post a blank sheet of newsprint and gather the group's ideas for a collective note. What are children's wishes for the recipients of their donations? What words might help someone feel better about making a new family home, after they have lost one? Write the note yourself on a card large enough for children to sign their own names; you may wish to make a group card that all the children can sign, using a large sheet of construction paper folded in half.

If children will accompany you to a refugee aid association to bring their donations, prepare for the visit. Logistically, you will need to collect permission slips and firm up arrangements for parent volunteers to help with transportation and supervision. You also may wish to prepare the children with a discussion. Draw out the children about what they expect they will see at the refugee aid association, and what questions they may want to ask now or when they visit. Tell them the agenda for the visit.

Ask children whether anything about the visit makes them feel concerned. Exposure to refugees and their resettlement needs may raise fears in some children about dire situations that could make them lose their own homes. You may tell them there is very little chance of such a thing happening to them. You can also tell them that when such a thing does happen, caring volunteers are ready to help, just as they, themselves, are doing with their donations.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Think about what went well in the session and what needed improvement. When were children most engaged? What parts of the session went well for you as a leader? What parts of the session seemed most meaningful to the participants? Did children make connections to the ideas you presented in the session? Did they connect with you and your co-leader? Did they connect with one another?

TAKING IT HOME

The keeping of bees is like the direction of sunbeams. – Henry David Thoreau

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

During our discussions of finding home in a particular place, the Creating Home group learned about the homes of other animals and compared some of them to our homes. This session explored what happens inside a beehive and how bees carry out certain functions of a home, such as providing a place to prepare and eat food, rest or sleep, and care for the young and elderly; sheltering inhabitants from storms, heat, and cold; and providing a place for the inhabitants to be together. In today's session we compared a beehive to our own home, which serves many of the same functions. Homes make us feel safe because they provide a place for us to eat, sleep, be together, and find shelter. In later sessions of Creating Home, we will consider how our faith home can serve many of the same functions.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Look for teachable moments to discuss the functions of a home with your child. For instance, during your bedtime ritual, you can mention that it's nice to have a home that provides a safe and cozy place to sleep at night. When you cross the threshold into your home during inclement weather, you can express thankfulness for a place where you can stay dry or warm.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Game

Ask your child to teach you the hand motions to this poem, which the children learned in today's session:

Here is the beehive	(Raise your closed fist with the back of your hand facing away from you.)
Where are the bees?	
Hidden inside where nobody sees.	
Now they come creeping out of the hive.	(Slowly begin to unfold your hand.)
One, two, three, four, five...	(Quickly pop up one finger for each number.)
Buzzzzzzzz!	(Move your fingers to imitate bees flying.)

A Family Adventure

Bees help human beings in a wide variety of ways. You can explore some of this variety by going to a health food store and looking to see how many products you

can find that have ingredients produced by, or help by, bees. You can look not only for honey and products containing royal jelly or beeswax, but also various kinds of produce which are pollinated by bees.

You might also wish to explore around your yard or a nearby park and see if you find bees at work. Examine the bees in their natural habitat. What kinds of flowers do they like? How do they fly – for short distances or long? In a straight line or on a wiggling one? Can you find more than one kind of bee, such as a honey bee and bumble bee? Remind children that bees are wonderful friends to people, but that they don't like to be touched, and should be viewed from a respectful distance.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Bee society is complex and there is a wealth of information available to all ages, especially about honeybees. For some factual background, visit the [Tapestry of Faith website](#) and select this curriculum, Creating Home (Living Faith, Kindergarten/First Grade). Choose Session 3: Beehive. Go to the Resources page and find Leader Resource, Background on Bees and Beehives.

Books for children about bees include:

Bees by Larry Dane Brimner (Grolier, 1999)

The Honeybee and the Robber: A Moving Picture Book by Eric Carle (Philomel Books, 1981)

The Honey Makers by Gail Gibbons (Morrow, 1997)

The Life and Times of the Honeybee by Charles Micucci (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995)

Life of the Honey Bee by Heiderose and Andreas Fischer-Nagel (Carolrhoda Books, Inc., 1986)

The Magic School Bus: Inside a Beehive by Joanne Cole, illustrated by Bruce Degen (Scholastic, 1998)

There are also many websites about bees, some of which include puzzles and games you and your child can do together. Two of these are the [British Beekeepers Association](#) website and the [National Honey Board](#) website.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: STORY — AESOP'S FABLE OF THE WORKER BEE, THE DRONE, AND THE WASP (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of story, "[Aesop's Fable of the Worker Bee, the Drone, and the Wasp](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: "[The Worker Bee, the Drone, and the Wasp](#)" coloring sheet, and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story so you can tell it to the group comfortably.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

This story provides some detail about bees' roles in the hive and reinforces the idea of specific roles within a community (or family). Read or tell the story to the group. At the conclusion, you may ask:

- Which bees were the ones that built the hive in the story?
- Do you think the worker bees and the drones all lived together in the same hive? Were they similar to human brothers and sisters, or other members of a human family like ours? In what way?
- How did the wasp know that the worker bees were the real builders?

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "Aesop's Fable of the Worker Bee, the Drone, and the Wasp" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

STORY: AESOP'S FABLE OF THE WORKER BEE, THE DRONE, AND THE WASP

One day some worker bees made a honeycomb in the hollow trunk of an oak. They settled nearby to rest. Then, the drones from their hive flew by. The drones said, "We made that honeycomb. It belongs to us."

"You did not make that honeycomb," replied the worker bees. "You know very well that you did not. We made it."

The drones insisted, "That honeycomb belongs to us and we are going to have it."

So the worker bees said, "Let us go together and see what the wasp has to say about whose honeycomb it is."

The worker bees and the drones flew in a big swarm to the wasp's nest. When the wasp came outside to see what the buzz was all about, the bees all talked at once about their dispute.

"You worker bees and drones," said the wasp, "are so much alike in shape, color, and sound that I cannot easily tell you apart. Surely I cannot tell which of you I have seen building the honeycomb in the oak tree."

"But I think the matter can be justly decided. Each group of you, the workers and the drones, must go to a hive in which there is no honey, and build up a new honeycomb. The group that makes a honeycomb and honey like that found in the oak tree is the owner of the tree comb."

"All right," said the worker bees, "we will do it! Let's go!" But the drones said, "We will have nothing to do with such a plan."

So the wasp said, "I see the worker bees are ready to make another honeycomb. But the drones don't want to do it. That must be because the drones do not know how! Surely, they did not make the honeycomb in the oak tree. It belongs to the worker bees."

The drones buzzed away very angry. For they knew the wasp was right. They didn't know how to make a honeycomb at all. And the worker bees happily flew back to the oak tree.

STORY: WHAT BEES DO AT HOME

This story is designed to be used with Leader Resource 2, Beehive Poster in Activity 3.

What Do Bees Do at Home?

How do you think bees get into their hives? (Point to the opening in the hive on the poster.)

That's right; the hive has an opening so the bees can go in and out. Last week we talked about doors to our homes that we use to go in and out. The bees' home has a door, also.

Some homes have a room or rooms. Beehives have chambers. Someone made the homes we live in and the beehive had to be made, too. Some people build their own homes; some live in homes that have been made by other people, whose job it is to make homes. The bees make the beehive themselves by producing wax and building honeycombs.

What are some of the things people do in their homes?

(You will probably get most of the desired responses: "eat," "sleep," "be safe," "stay away from rain/snow/cold/heat." If not, you can ask leading questions. As participants offer responses, describe the bee version of each human activity they suggest.)

Do you eat at home? Bees eat at home, too. Do bees eat with spoons, forks or other utensils? No. Can you show me how you think bees eat?

They eat pollen, nectar, and honey. Some of the worker bees have the job of leaving the hive to find pollen and nectar. After finding it, they store it in sacs on their legs and fly back to the hive, where they share it with all the other bees.

Have you ever gathered vegetables from a garden or picked berries from a bush? Let's all pretend we are gathering food. (Stand up and pretend to pick vegetables or berries.)

Does someone in your home leave to gather food? Some people farm the land for their food. Others work at other jobs to earn money or goods that they trade for food. No matter how the food is collected, people and bees come home to share their food with their families,

communities, or colonies. A colony is what you call a hive of bees. Some colonies have 60, 000 bees! That's a lot of bees to feed!

Bees rest and sleep in their hive, much as you do at home. How do you think bees sleep? (Allow participants to show you how they think a bee might sleep.)

Worker bees take care of the young bees and old bees in their hive. People sometimes take care of children and elderly family members in our homes, too.

We need our homes for protection. Beehives give bees protection from rain and storms. The hive protects the bees when it is too cold or too hot outside.

We use our homes to store the things we need to live: like food and clothing. Bees don't need clothes, but the hive keeps their food, like honey, close by, so they can reach it when they need it.

Within the hive, bees have special jobs to do. The drones are male bees that fertilize some of the eggs. There are not too many drones in a hive. Each hive has more drones than queens because there is only one queen in each hive. The queen's job is to lay the eggs and she can lay thousands of eggs a day! The queen also spends time with the worker bees, which help take care of her.

Most of the bees in a hive are worker bees. These are female bees and they do all of the other jobs in the hive. Worker bees feed and take care of the eggs and baby bees. They build the hive. They add on to the hive when it needs to grow, by producing the wax to build the walls of the hive. They keep the hive cool or warm, as needed. They protect the hive from invaders. They leave the hive to search for pollen and nectar from plants, bushes, and trees and bring it back to the hive as food for everyone. They are always working to keep the hive healthy. That's why people talk about being "as busy as a bee!"

In our homes, we have jobs to do, too. Some people clean and repair the home. Some take care of the young. Some people bring home food and some cook. Our homes provide for many of our basic needs, just like the beehive does for the bees. Bees in a colony also work together to make their beehive a nice place to live.

HANDOUT 1: BEE BODY PARTS



LEADER RESOURCE 1: BACKGROUND ON BEES AND BEEHIVES

Bees start off life as eggs. The queen is the only female bee that will reproduce and she will lay all the eggs for a colony. Eggs are deposited in cells of the honeycomb. Soon they develop into larvae, which are cared for by the female worker bees. Worker bees feed the larvae a special substance called royal jelly, which they produce with their own bodies. Most larvae are fed royal jelly for only the first couple of days and then are fed pollen, nectar, and honey until they become pupae. During this stage, the worker bees close the cells with wax. Shortly, they emerge as full grown bees.

Most of the larvae will grow into female worker bees, which do all the work of the hive. The youngest worker bees clean the hive. Then they work the nursery, tending the eggs and larvae or the queen. Other bees work in other parts of the hive, producing wax to add on to the honeycomb and increase the size of the hive. Some worker bees receive the nectar brought to them by foraging bees. They mix the nectar with chemicals in their mouths until it starts to thicken into honey. The honey is stored in cells of the honeycomb and sealed with caps until it is needed. Honeybees produce much more honey than the colony could ever consume.

Older worker bees work outside the hive. The bees you frequently see buzzing in mid-air just outside the hive are flapping their wings to cool the hive or standing guard to protect the hive. Some bees forage for pollen and nectar. In this way, bees are very important to humans because they pollinate about one third of the crops we grow. They also pollinate many wildflowers and plants and are key players in local ecosystems.

Foraging bees, upon finding a good source of nectar and pollen, will report back to the hive where they will “dance” to let other worker bees know the location of the good plants. Most bee-pollinated plants reward the bees for visiting them by providing nectar. The bees store the nectar in special honey stomachs. Frequently, the source of the nectar is located deep within a flower and the bee, in reaching for the nectar, will brush pollen from previously visited flowers upon the pistil of the current flower. During the same visit, the bee will collect pollen from the current flower and put it in sacks located on its back legs.

Each hive has only one queen. The queen bee is taken care of by worker bees, which constantly touch and groom her. As they touch the queen, worker bees pick up a pheromone. This substance is passed from worker bee to worker bee. It keeps the bees loyal to the queen and the hive. Healthy queens produce this pheromone in strong amounts. As the queen ages or experiences poor health, she will produce less and less pheromone. Also, if the hive gets too large, each worker bee will receive less pheromone. As they receive less of it, the worker bees in the nursery will construct larger cells to hold queen larvae. Eggs will be deposited in these cells and fed royal jelly as they become pupae and for the rest of their lives – this is what enables them to become fertile queen bees. Upon developing into grown bees, these larger queens emerge from their cells. The first queen bee to emerge kills the other queen larvae. If the older queen has not yet died, she will also usually be killed by the new queen. However, if the new queen was produced because the hive has become too large and the old queen is still healthy, the old queen will fly off with thousands of worker bees and several drones to form a new hive.

The male bees, drones, are the product of unfertilized eggs and are only produced when needed for reproduction. If the hive has a new queen, drones will be produced to mate with her. Shortly after emerging, she will mate with several drones. After mating, the drones will die. The queen is able to keep the sperm of the drones in her body for the rest of her life. She will never need to mate again to produce the hundreds of thousands of eggs she will lay over the next several years. After mating is finished, the remaining drones will be pushed out of the hive, where they will die, or be killed by the worker bees.

New hives are formed when a queen, worker bees, and drones swarm out of their old hive and go in search of new living quarters. You might see a swarm of bees gathered on a tree limb while a new site is located. Once a site is located, worker bees busily build a new hive, while the queen mates with the drones.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: BEEHIVE POSTER



LEADER RESOURCE 3: HONEY PARFAITS

For each parfait, you will need:

- half a banana
- a small parfait glass or clear plastic cup
- 2 tablespoons granola
- a plastic butter knife
- 2 tablespoons honey
- a plastic spoon
- 2 tablespoons unflavored yogurt, vanilla pudding, or vanilla ice cream
- a napkin or paper plate

Give each child a napkin or paper plate, a parfait glass or plastic cup, a spoon, a butter knife, and half a banana.

Show children how to peel the banana; split it in two, lengthwise; and slice each long piece into small pieces.

Show how to make the parfait's bottom layer, using almost half of the banana slices.

Then, spoon into each parfait glass layers of granola, yogurt, and honey, one tablespoon of each.

Repeat the layers, this time using almost all the banana slices and another tablespoon each of granola, yogurt, and honey.

Garnish with remaining banana slices.

FIND OUT MORE

To learn more about bees and their homes before leading this session, read Leader Resource 1, [Background on Bees and Beehives](#). (included in this document)

These websites have more information about bees and honey:

The [British Beekeepers Association](#) website

The [National Honey Board](#) website

The University of Arizona [Africanized Honey Bee Education Project](#) website

There are many children's books about bees and beehives, including

Bees by Larry Dane Brimner (Grolier, 1999)

The Honeybee and the Robber: A Moving Picture Book by Eric Carle (Philomel Books, 1981)

The Honey Makers by Gail Gibbons (Morrow, 1997)

The Life and Times of the Honeybee by Charles Micucci (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995)

Life of the Honey Bee by Heiderose and Andreas Fischer-Nagel (Carolrhoda Books, Inc., 1986)

The Magic School Bus: Inside a Beehive by Joanne Cole, illustrated by Bruce Degen (Scholastic, 1998)

Heifer International

Find out more about [Heifer International online](#).

SESSION 4: ANIMAL HOMES

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most radical thing we can do is to stay home, so we can learn the names of the plants and animals around us; so that we can begin to know what tradition we're part of. -- Terry Tempest Williams

Terry Tempest Williams is a naturalist and an environmental activist. In the quote that opens this session, she talks about learning the names of animals and plants around our homes so we can see how we fit into the "tradition" of all life with which we share the Earth. Typically, however, children's education about nature involves big or exotic creatures such as lions, bears, dinosaurs, or eagles. Films and television programs about nature also emphasize the large, the faraway, and the unusual.

When we explore nature around our homes, we can notice and appreciate the spider living in the attic, the toad under the bush in front of our house, and the house plants we love. These little pieces of nature are where we must stop, look, and listen. In this session, participants will observe the natural world close to them, learning how some animals and plants aid in the functions of our family homes.

The previous session, Session 3: Beehives focused on bees. The beehive's unique gift of community enhances our understanding of both our own family homes and our shared Unitarian Universalist faith home. This session explores other animal homes found in nature including nests, burrows, and dens. Each of these animal homes serves a particular set of functions for its inhabitants. A nest allows a bird to fly to and from home. A burrow allows a chipmunk to collect and save seeds fallen to the ground. Taking the time to observe these homes and discuss their functions will take us on another phase of our journey.

Another important element of this session is the homes we create for animals we use in agriculture. Children often do not understand the connection between their macaroni and cheese and the cow that gave the milk that then became the cheese. In this session, children will learn about human stewardship of farm animals by focusing on the homes we provide for the animals that provide us with food.

Some Unitarian Universalists do not eat animal flesh (vegetarians) or products made by or from animals (vegans). As you explore human relationships with domesticated animals and livestock, be sensitive to children in your group who are being raised with specific eating choices. Think about how you can demonstrate

the spirituality humans can find in stewardship for our domesticated animals, in a way that will resonate for and not exclude a child who eats neither meat nor eggs. Such a child may belong to a family where not using animals for food is considered a highly spiritual choice. Use each opportunity as a way to teach, and to learn.

As children explore animal homes in this session, be ready for spontaneous comments as they see parallel functions in their own family homes. Feeding, growing, finding shelter, and resting are all activities that the physical home supports. Children who are already comfortable with the concept of learning from nature will have many observations as you begin to discuss these topics. Be patient, but firm, with those whose excitement spills out in discussion to make sure all have opportunities to participate.

The activities in this session call for you to show children pictures of wild animals and farm animals. Beforehand, gather old magazines such as *National Geographic*, calendars, and picture books. Visit the websites you will find suggested throughout this session. Download images you want to show the group.

If you are a regular nature lover you will be familiar with the terms in this session. Check out your knowledge of animal homes on the website of the [Utah Educational Network](#). You may be amazed at how much you already know, and equally amazed at how much you have to learn.

GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce participants to the diversity of animals in our world
- Help participants see parallel functions in animal homes and our family homes
- Guide participants to appreciate that animals and humans share the world

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand that wild animals build their own homes for specific functions
- Be able to identify the words "burrow," "den," and "nest"
- Practice appreciation of the natural beauty of wild animals' homes
- Identify farm animals and learn how we, as humans, fulfill our stewardship by creating homes for them to live in

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Lizard's Song	10
Activity 2: Who Shares the Barn Home?	18
Activity 3: Burrow, Den, or Nest	12
Activity 4: Wild Animal Matching Puzzles	10
Faith in Action: Audubon Bird Count — Long-term	10
Faith in Action: Community Supported Agriculture — Short-term	60
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Farm Animal Interactive Story — It Could Be Worse	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

The term "nesting" evokes birds, but it also describes human behavior upon claiming a space. In your moments of spiritual preparation to lead this session, think about human beings in the following situations and imagine how they might "nest."

- A military family has moved once a year for the past three years. They are now approaching their newest base housing.
- A single mother and two children are evicted from their home. They find a shelter for women and children that will take them for six weeks.
- A family living in an apartment building narrowly escapes a building fire that consumes their home and belongings. They are uninsured. They receive \$1,000 in gift cards from a local charity and an offer to rent another apartment in the same complex.
- An immigrant family arrives in the United States and enters their first housing with their four boxes, four suitcases, and one bag.

When have you had to "nest" in a new situation? How did that feel? What worked to make you feel at home?

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LCD light
- Lighter or matches if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of stones, at least one stone for each participant
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Place the basket of stones near the threshold where participants enter your meeting space.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor, with the chalice candle and matches or LCD light in the center. Place a copy of the opening words there, too, if you have not memorized or posted them.
- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words, so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. The labyrinth should be spread upon the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand.

If you have any newcomers or guests in your group, invite them to choose a stone from the basket to use as a name stone. You may wish to ask a participant to offer the basket of stones to newcomers or guests. Inviting new people to take part in the opening ritual is a way to practice hospitality in your Creating Home program which your participants can emulate in their family homes and your shared faith home.

Light the chalice and recite the following affirmation:

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

Say the following in your own words.

This labyrinth reminds us that we are taking a journey together. Every session is yet another portion of that journey. Each time we meet, everyone places his or her stone within the labyrinth. Each stone is a symbol that we are all fellow members of the Creating Home program.

When you place your stone, please say your name and the name of your favorite animal. Sharing with one another is a tradition in our faith community.

Instruct a participant to place their name stone on the labyrinth, and guide the others to do the same, one at a time.

Then, say in your own words:

If you were here with us last time, you remember we talked about the homes where bees live. Who can tell us the name of where bees live?

Remind the group that bees live in a beehive. Then say:

Today we will talk about all kinds of animals and their homes. We will talk about wild animals and the homes they build for themselves, and we will talk about farm animals that co-create their homes with humans. As we look at our chalice and labyrinth, we can think about the many kinds of animals and their homes. Think for a moment about your favorite kind of animal, the kind of home it lives in, and the sound that your favorite animal might make.

You may invite the children to demonstrate the animal sounds they imagined.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — LIZARD'S SONG (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of story, "[Lizard's Song](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: "[Lizard's Song](#)" coloring sheet, and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Read and print out story, "Lizard's Song." Prepare to tell the story.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

Gather participants where they can sit comfortably and hear a story. Say:

Wild animals build their own homes that are right for them. The story we are about to share is a Native American legend. It explains why each kind of animal must have its own kind of home.

Read aloud or tell in your own words the story, "Lizard's Song."

After the story, ask participants:

- Why did the bear like lizard's song so much?
- Why do you think the bear could not live on the rock?
- Why couldn't the lizard live in a den?

Then invite children to name their favorite wild animal and describe and/or name the animal's home. You may ask why they think the animals they name live in the kinds of homes they do.

Tell the story again, this time leading the children in singing the song with some of the new animal names and homes substituted for "lizard/rock" and "bear/den."

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "Lizard's Song" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 2: WHO SHARES THE BARN HOME? (18 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1: [Who Shares the Barn Home?](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- Sheets of blank paper for all participants
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors), glue sticks or tape, and crayons, markers, and/or colored pencils for participants to share
- Optional: Pictures of farm animals in their homes, for viewing and/or to cut out and paste

Preparation for Activity

- Photocopy Handout 1: Who Shares the Barn Home? for all participants.
- Gather sheets of blank paper, scissors, glue sticks or tape, and drawing/coloring implements.
- Collect photographs to show the group of real farm animals in their homes. Good sources are magazines, children's picture books, and websites. Try this [farm sanctuary website](#).
- Optional: Find and photocopy images of farm animals for children to cut out and paste in their "barns"; be sure you have enough for all participants.

Description of Activity

In this activity, children understand that some animals have been taken out of the wild and domesticated by humans to help meet our needs for food and clothing. Stewardship of these animals is humans' responsibility, in a reciprocal relationship that yields us eggs, wool, honey, and many other products including, for many, meat. The children will identify common farm animals while learning about the homes humans provide for them and the functions these homes serve.

Ask the children to name the homes of various farm animals. Prompt or redirect as necessary to draw out the information that horses live in stables or stalls, chickens live in chicken coops, hogs and pigs live in small buildings called sties. Dairy cows live in fields and barns.

If you have brought pictures of farm animals in their homes, show these to the children.

You might ask the group, "Can a horse build a barn to live in? Can a hen build a coop to sleep in and lay her eggs?" Point out that humans need to create shelters for farm animals to use as homes. A farmer builds a barn, and many animals share the shelter of the barn. Farmers build a chicken coop and fill it with hay, and chickens build their nests from the hay and lay eggs in the coop.

Distribute Handout 1: Who Shares the Barn Home? Tell children they may color or decorate the barn as they wish, though real barns are usually red, white, grey, or brown and are even sometimes made of stone. Distribute crayons, markers, or colored pencils, and invite the children to begin coloring.

As they color their barns, bring scissors around and demonstrate how to cut the double doors of their barns and fold the doors open. If you have photocopied pictures of farm animals, distribute these now, along with scissors. Or have paper available and invite children to draw and color animals themselves.

Give each child a piece of blank paper to place behind the handout. Show them where to draw or paste their favorite farm animals so the animals can be seen when the barn doors are opened.

Help children tape or glue the pages of animals behind the handout and "close" the doors to their barns. Then, invite them to open the barn doors and show one another who shares the barn home.

ACTIVITY 3: BURROW, DEN, OR NEST (12 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Photographic and illustrated images of wild animals and farm animals

- Quilts, sheets, large sticks, and other items that children can use to build their own burrows, dens, or nests

Preparation for Activity

- Find photographs or pictures of wild animals and farm animals and their homes in magazines such as *Our Big Backyard*, *National Geographic*, or farming journals and in other places suggested under "Leader Resources" in the Resources section.
- Collect old quilts, blankets, and sheets for children to use, along with large sticks, long grasses, and other natural items.

Description of Activity

In this activity, children will explore how wild animals make their homes to adapt to their environment while learning the words "burrow," "den," and "nest." Ask the children if they have ever heard any of these words to describe a wild animal's home. Invite a few volunteers to explain what these types of homes are like, and what kind of animals live in them.

You may wish to offer these definitions from *Webster's Dictionary* to help the children match wild animals to the correct habitats.

- A burrow is "a hole in the ground made by certain animals for shelter and habitation."
- A den is "a lair of a wild animal especially a beast of prey."
- A nest is "the bed, receptacle or location made by a bird for holding its eggs and for hatching and rearing its young."

You can say:

Wild animals find or make their own homes. Their homes give the animals a place of shelter, a place where they can safely rest, and a place to raise their families. In these ways, wild animal homes are similar to our family homes.

Ask children for examples of wild animal homes they might find in a park or right outside their own homes. You may suggest an anthill or a bird nest. Some children may even have wild animal homes inside their family homes; for example, a skunk may have made a home in the family basement or a bird may have made a home atop a window air conditioner.

Tell the group:

Wild animals make their own homes. If we destroy their homes, the wild animals cannot live. For some animals, just the smell of humans near their homes can keep the animal from

returning to care for their babies. We must keep a safe distance from wild animal homes.

Now, let's pretend we are wild animals that need to build our own homes.

Form small groups to be "families" of wild animals. You may wish to assign each group a different animal to be: rabbits that need a burrow, wolves that need a den, or geese that need a nest.

Provide quilts, sheets, large sticks, and other items to each group. As the children begin to build their homes, remind them that they are wild animals that need shelter and safety and room for all to sleep.

If you have time, close this activity by asking groups to explain how the home they have built provides shelter, protection, and room to raise a family.

This would be a fun activity to photograph for future display.

ACTIVITY 4: WILD ANIMAL MATCHING PUZZLES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1: [Wild Animal Matching Puzzles](#) (included in this document)
- Crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1: Wild Animal Matching Puzzles. Decide whether you will cut out the puzzle pieces in advance and have small groups of children do the puzzles during the session and/or whether you will give each child a copy of the entire sheet of five puzzles to take home. Photocopy the number of puzzles you need on card stock.

Description of Activity

Matching animals with their homes provides a tactile activity to help children understand that wild animals build their own homes for specific functions and reinforces children's knowledge about which animals live in which kind of homes. If you have made several sets of puzzles ahead of time, invite the children to try matching the animals with their homes on their own, in pairs, or in small groups. First, show all the pictures to the entire group. Then distribute the puzzles and have children mix up all the pieces and match the cards.

You may also like to give each child a copy of Leader Resource 1: Wild Animal Matching Puzzles with all five, two-piece puzzles not yet cut into puzzle pieces. Invite the children to color their puzzle sheets and bring them

home to cut, with an adult's help, and play the matching game with family members.

ACTIVITY 5: FARM ANIMAL ANTICS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Post a blank page of newsprint and title the page "Farm Animals."

Description of Activity

Invite the children to form a circle, standing as they are able.

Tell the group that in order to understand the kind of shelter and care farm animals need, they can try to imagine what it might be like to be one of these animals. Ask the children to name some farm animals and list these animals on the newsprint.

Name one animal on the list and lead children in a physical exploration and discussion with these questions:

- How many feet does [a horse] have?
- How does [a horse] move?
- What kind of shelter will [a horse] need from weather?
- Do [horses] live alone or together in groups?
- Show me how big the [horse's] shelter must be.
- Show me how the [horse] eats.
- What will we need to build so the [horse] can eat?

Continue with another animal until you have explored the features and needs of all the animals the children have suggested.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed upon it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, bold marker, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Optional: The words "burrow," "den," "nest," and "shelter" printed on index cards to post on your Word Wall
- If you have a Word Wall, write the words "burrow," "den," "nest," and "shelter" with bold marker on index cards or post-its.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Tell the children that it is now time to share a closing ritual to mark the end of your religious education time together for this session.

Relight the chalice. Invite the children to take their name stones from the labyrinth, place them in the basket, and return to the circle. Then, ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite the children to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,

When our heart is in a holy place.

We are blessed with love and amazing grace.

When our heart is in a holy place.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The words for our Word Wall today are
"burrow," "den," "nest," and "shelter."

Show the group the index cards or post-its on which you have written "burrow," "den," "nest," and "shelter." Post these on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Tell the group:

We are glad you joined us today. We hope you felt sheltered and safe in your faith home, here in our Unitarian Universalist congregation, as we learned together. Next time we meet we will learn more together about creating home.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout you have prepared. Remind the children to give the handout to their parents. Thank and dismiss the group.

FAITH IN ACTION: AUDUBON BIRD COUNT — LONG-TERM (60 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Go to the [National Audubon Society](#) website to learn about the century-old Christmas Bird Count that takes place each year between December 14 and January 5.
- Contact the National Audubon Society via the website or by phone to find a local Christmas Bird Count that the Creating Home group can join as volunteer bird watchers.
- Contact the local organizer of the bird count to make specific plans for the group to participate.
- Generate and distribute a permission form for the children to travel to the bird count location and participate in the activity.
- Recruit parents or other adult congregants to join in the bird count and/or to help with transportation.

Description of Activity

Children are learning that wild animals build their own homes for specific functions. Involving your group in a local bird count sponsored by the Audubon Society engages participants more deeply in bird “lifestyles” and habitats, while reinforcing the Unitarian Universalist principle of caring for our Earth

Each year, the National Audubon Society conducts a national Christmas Bird Count. This bird count is done at different times across the United States in the last month of the year. The bird count helps Audubon Society keep track of where bird populations are changing and where research needs to focus.

To find out when and where near your congregation the next bird count will be, go to the Audubon Society website <http://www.audubon.org> and do a search for “bird count.”

Children are usually welcomed on the bird count, as long as enough adults accompany them. Your local Audubon Society may have specific rules about children.

Instead of or in addition to attending a bird count, the group may be able to help your local Audubon Society promote the Christmas Bird Count. The children could

make posters to display or flyers to distribute about the bird count.

FAITH IN ACTION: COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE— SHORT-TERM (60 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Sheets of 11X17-inch paper.

Preparation for Activity

- Visit one or more websites about Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) by doing a web search or using the links provided under “Leader Resources” in the Resources section. Look for information that will help you explain to children the principles of CSA and how its approaches protect the health of our food and the welfare of farm animals used for food.

Description of Activity

To explore the responsibilities and choices humans have in co-creating farm animal homes, guide children to explore Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Use this [website](#) to learn more about Community Supported Agriculture. Explore why it is important for the health and safety of our food, both vegetable and animal. To simplify children's learning, pick one kind of animal such as chicken or dairy cow. Learn about how that animal is housed and cared for in accordance with the principles of CSA.

Most states have some form of CSA. Although Community Supported Agriculture began in Japan, it has spread across England and into the United States. Community Supported Agriculture is based on buying shares into small and usually organic farming businesses. Once shares, or partial shares, are purchased, the community member picks up their “share” of the produce, meat or honey. There are usually central pick up centers. Websites with more information about CSA are listed in the Resources section under “Leader Resources.”

Aid children in making posters to educate others in the faith home about CSA. Help the group think of taglines that explain CSA and why it is important, such as “Nourish Your Body with Healthy Food” or “Community Supported Agriculture Helps Us All.” Write these taglines on a black board, white board, or posted newsprint and invite children to copy the words for their posters. Children can draw or cut pictures out of gardening or animal magazines to decorate their posters. Display the posters on a social action bulletin board or in the entry of the worship center.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

As you clean up the learning space, think about ways that animals have provided for your life.

TAKING IT HOME

Perhaps the most radical thing we can do is to stay home, so we can learn the names of the plants and animals around us; so that we can begin to know what tradition we're part of. — Terry Tempest Williams

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

We spent a wonderful time getting inside animal homes of all kinds. We explored farm animals and our relationship with animals that we have taken out of the wild to provide food. Humans provide farm animal homes for rest, shelter and a place for growth. We also talked about how wild animals make their own homes that provide the same functions. We talked about how we can observe wild animal homes from a distance, but we must not disturb them.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Many families have animals as pets, and many provide shelter for wild animals by having a bird house, a tree where squirrels nest or a place where spiders build their webs undisturbed. Discuss the animals that live in or around your home. How do you provide shelter for animals?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER: Try...

A Family Game

A fun way to help children learn and remember the various kinds of homes that animals have is to play a game in which one person says "I'm a ... and I live in...." The other person (or people) shout out as quick as they can where they think the given animal lives. You can make the game as simple as "I'm a squirrel and I live in a tree" or as complicated as "I'm a manatee and I live in the Florida Everglades." The person who gets the animal home right gets to propose the next animal. If the child posing the question doesn't know what sort of a home their animal lives in, an adult may need to referee the answers.

A Family Adventure

Take a walk and help your young child identify animal homes in your area. From an ant hill to a dog house, it is good for children to experience how animal homes differ as well as the features they have in common. If you have time, visit a zoo and discuss with children what happens when wild animals are removed from their wild homes. When humans choose to move wild animals for

educational purposes, we must then take responsibility for the animal's shelter and care.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

The internet has resources for both children and adults to learn about animal homes. You can find kid-friendly [info on animal homes](#), a [game in which kids help animals to find their home](#), and [detailed descriptions of a few different kinds of animal homes](#).

Likewise, there are a variety of books for children on the subject, including *Animal Homes (Kingfisher Young Knowledge Series)* edited by Angela Wilkes and Belinda Weber (Houghton Mifflin, 2003)

Adults can find out more about [Community Supported Agriculture](#) and get information about [CSA in your area](#) on the web.

See "cage free" housing of chickens that are used for meat and for egg production on the [National Humane Society](#) website.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FARM ANIMAL INTERACTIVE STORY — IT COULD BE WORSE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[It Could Be Worse](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: "[It Could Be Worse](#)" coloring sheet, and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review and print out the story, "It Could Be Worse."
- Practice telling the story so you can present it effectively and engage children in their roles.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

The Polish Jewish folktale children will hear in this activity rests on the silly image of farm animals living with humans in human family homes. Children practice identifying farm animals and their sounds, and gain a different perspective on how we humans make sure domesticated animals have appropriate homes.

In this fun and participatory story, a farmer lives in a house with his wife, their children, and the grandparents. The house isn't big enough for all of them. So he asks the rabbi for advice. The rabbi tells him to bring animals into his home too. First chickens, then goats, then cows, or whatever you like. The situation goes from bad to

worse. After the rabbi suggests he take all of the animals out of the house, the farmer finds his home very peaceful.

Classifying animals into types such as zoo animals, farm animals, and wild animals is important for children. A wild animal lives differently than a farm animal. A captive wild animal, such as a zoo animal, lives differently than an animal in its natural habitat. Each has a different kind of relationship with humans.

Children love to play roles and to act out animal sounds. Before you present the story, assign roles to all the children as directed in the story, "It Could Be Worse." Allow the children who will be goats, chickens, or cows to discuss the type of home the animal lives in and the sound the animal makes.

Read the story through once. Then, tell the children you will read it again, but this time they will act in their roles. Point out the areas of the meeting space that you want to become the barn, the family home, and the rabbi's home. Tell the children who are pretending to be animals that when the farmer lets them into the house, they can make their animal homes inside the family home and make the noises they think the animal would really make.

After the second reading, ask the children who pretended to be the humans in the story how it felt to hear the animal noises in a human home. How was it to imagine sharing a bed with chickens, or a goat? Point out that farm animals have homes that humans build such as a pig sty or a dairy cow barn.

STORY: IT COULD BE WORSE

Adapted from a Jewish folktale from Poland

In this fun and participatory story a farmer lives in a house with his wife and children and the grandparents, and it is so noisy that he thinks he will go crazy. The rabbi advises the farmer to bring his animals into his home, too. First chickens, then goats, then sheep. The situation goes from bad to worse. Finally, the Rabbi suggests that the farmer take all of the animals out of the house. When he does so, the farmer's family finds the home very peaceful.

Assign, or let children choose, the roles of the farmer and his wife, the rabbi, a child, two grandparents, a chicken, a goat, and a sheep. If the group has more children, cast multiple chickens, goats, and sheep. Invite the children taking animal roles to practice their animal parts now, so they will be ready to act them when their animal is mentioned in the story.

It Could Be Worse

A long time ago, there was a family that lived happily in a small, quiet house in Poland. One day they learned that the grandparents were coming to live with them. The child was very excited about this, and so were the parents. But the parents worried because their house was very small. They knew that when the grandparents arrived, the house would become crowded and much noisier.

The farmer went to ask the rabbi what to do. The rabbi says, "Let them come."

So the grandparents move in. They have a lot of furniture, which goes in the living room, where they sleep, and in some other rooms, too. It is crowded and noisy in the house so the farmer goes back to the rabbi: "I did what you said, Rabbi. Now my in-laws are here. And it is really crowded in the house."

The rabbi thinks for moment. Then he asks, "Do you have chickens?"

"Of course I have chickens," says the farmer.

"Bring them into the house," says the rabbi.

The farmer is confused, but he knows the rabbi is very wise. So he goes home, and brings all the chickens to live inside the house with the family. But, it is no less crowded and noisy. In fact, it is worse, with the clucking, and pecking, and flapping of wings.

The farmer goes back to the rabbi. "I did what you said, Rabbi. Now with my in-laws and the chickens, too, it is really crowded in the house."

The rabbi thinks for moment. Then he asks, "Do you have any goats?"

"Of course I have goats," says the farmer.

"Bring them into the house," says the rabbi.

The farmer is confused, but he knows the rabbi is very wise. He brings all the goats from the barn to live inside the house. It is no less crowded and noisy. In fact, it is much worse, with the chickens clucking and flapping their wings, and the goats baa-ing and butting their heads against the walls and one another.

The next day, the farmer goes back to the rabbi. "I did what you said, Rabbi. Now my in-laws have no place to sleep because the chickens have taken their bed. The goats are sticking their heads into everything and making a lot of noise."

The rabbi thinks. He looks very puzzled. Then he says, "Aha! You must have some sheep."

"Of course I have sheep," says the farmer.

"Bring them into the house," says the rabbi.

The farmer knows the rabbi is very wise. So he brings the sheep inside. It is no less crowded and noisy. In fact, it is much, much worse. The chickens are clucking and flapping their wings, the goats are baa-ing and butting their heads. The sheep are baa-ing, too, and one sat on the farmer's eyeglasses and broke them. The house is loud and crazy and it is starting to smell like a barn.

Completely exasperated, the farmer goes back to the rabbi. "Rabbi," he says, "I have followed your advice. I have done everything you said. Now my in-laws have no place to sleep because the chickens are laying eggs in their bed. The goats are baa-ing and butting their heads, and the sheep are breaking things. The house smells like a barn."

The rabbi frowned. He closed his eyes and thought for a long time. Finally he said, "This is what you do. Take the sheep back to the barn. Take the goats back to the barn. Take the chickens back to their coop."

The farmer ran home and did exactly as the rabbi had told him. As he took the animals out of the house, his child and wife and in-laws began to tidy up the rooms. By the time the last chicken was settled in her coop, the house looked quite nice. And, it was quiet. All the family agreed their home was the most spacious, peaceful, and comfortable home anywhere.

STORY: LIZARD'S SONG

Adapted from a National Park Service website; used by permission of Wind Cave National Park.

In this Native American legend, Lizard sings a happy song about his home: "Zole, zole, zole, zole, zole, zole, rock is my home." Bear wants to learn the song. Lizard shares the song, but Bear keeps forgetting it. Bear insists again and again that Lizard re-teach her the song. Finally Lizard tells Bear that the reason she can't remember the song is that "rock" is not her home, "den" is her home. Bear goes off singing the adapted song, which she doesn't forget.

For the tune to Lizard's song, you may use "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Change the last line from "rock is my home" to "den is my home" for Bear's song. Before you begin reading or telling the story, invite the group to join in when you sing:

"Zole, zole, zole, rock (den) is my home."

Note: Zole is pronounced "zoh/lee."

Lizard's Song

There was a lizard who lived on a rock. He was very happy living on his rock. All day long Lizard would sing "Zole, zole, zole, rock is my home. Zole, zole, zole, rock is my home."

One day a bear saw him sitting on the rock and heard him singing. She wondered why the lizard was so happy. So she asked him, "Why are you so happy?"

Lizard said that he was happy because he was at home and the rock was a great place to live. "Oh," said Bear. She went back to her home and thought "I wish I knew that song, so I would be as happy as the lizard."

The next day, Bear went back to Lizard's rock. She asked Lizard to teach her the song. Lizard said he would be very happy to teach it to her. He sang "Zole, zole, zole, rock is my home, zole, zole, zole, rock is my home." That made Bear feel good again. She went home. But on the way, she forgot the song.

The next day, she went back to Lizard and asked him if he would teach her the song again. Lizard said he would be very happy to teach the song again. He sang "Zole, zole, zole, rock is my home, zole, zole, zole, rock is my home." Again Bear went home, and again she forgot the song.

So she went back to Lizard one more time. This time, Lizard was asleep on his warm rock in the sunshine. What could Bear do? She decided to pick Lizard up and put him in a bag. Then she could take Lizard to her home. After his nap, he could teach Bear his song.

On the way, Lizard woke up. He did not know where he was. He knew he wasn't at home, on his rock. He was very scared. He didn't know what to do. He decided to sing his song so he wouldn't be so frightened. He sang "Zole, zole, zole, rock is my home, zole, zole, zole, rock is my home."

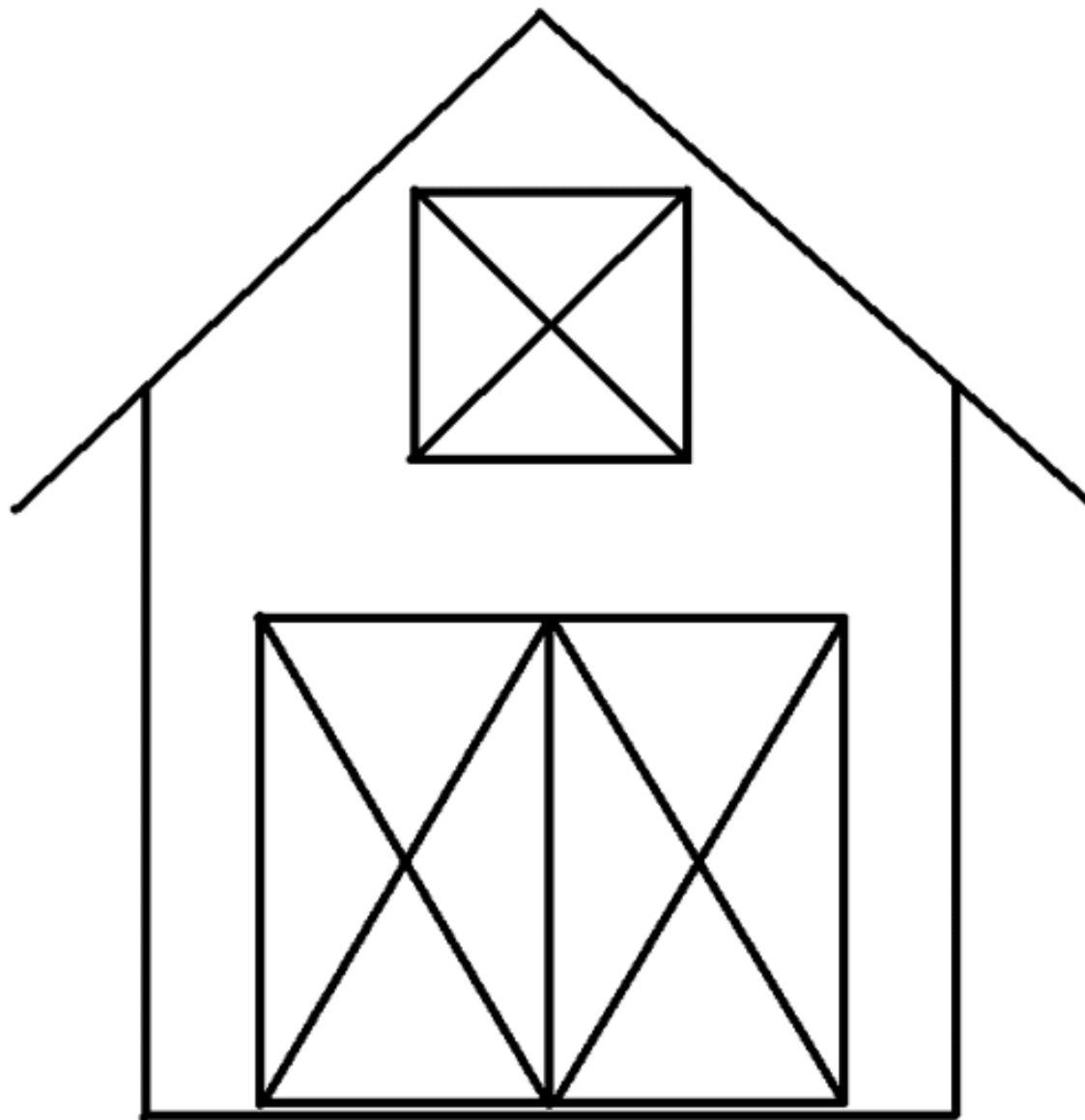
When Bear got home, she opened the bag. "Where are we?" asked Lizard.

"This is my home," said Bear. "I'm sorry if I scared you when I brought you here."

Now Lizard saw that Bear didn't live on a rock. Now he understood why Bear couldn't learn the song. He told Bear that she couldn't learn the song because she didn't live on a rock. Bear was disappointed.

"But," Lizard said, "I can make you a song that you can learn and remember." He sang "Zole, zole, zole, den is my home, zole, zole, zole, den is my home." Bear learned that song very easily and she was very happy.

HANDOUT 1: WHO SHARES THE BARN HOME



LEADER RESOURCE 1: WILD ANIMAL MATCHING PUZZLES



FIND OUT MORE

Find out more about [Community Supported Agriculture](#) and get information about [CSA in your area](#) on the web.

Learn about issues regarding the housing of chickens that are used for meat and for egg production on the [National Humane Society](#) website.

SESSION 5: HOME IN NATURE

INTRODUCTION

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. -- Henry David Thoreau

Many Unitarian Universalists applaud Henry David Thoreau as a transcendentalist who truly understood the world. He believed in a simple world where we can look to the rhythms of nature for examples of a good life. Opinionated and philosophical, Thoreau was likely considered a curmudgeon by some of his peers. Dying at age 44, he lived a short life by today's standards, yet his writings were prophetic and ageless.

The lessons of modeling our home life after nature and keeping life simple are relevant to children in today's world. Thoreau observed animals in nature as they created their family homes, using their homes to rest, to eat, and to grow, and to protect their young. While never a spouse, nor a parent, Thoreau taught school and tutored Ralph Waldo Emerson's children. These experiences surely helped him to understand the cycle of human life as beginning with the birth of young.

In *Walden*, Thoreau sets out a life of deliberate living that includes learning. He chose nature as an instructor. This session introduces children to the idea of learning from nature as they observe nature and transfer the knowledge they gain to their own family homes and their shared faith home.

In this session, participants use nature journals. The Leader Resources section for this session offers ideas for making journals for your participants before the session.

The Faith in Action activity engages participants in a clean-up of a public green space within walking distance of your meeting location. Consider incorporating the Closing for this session into this Faith in Action activity. An outdoor closing ritual will reinforce this session's focus on our human relationship with the natural world.

GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce Henry David Thoreau
- Demonstrate the simple life as an expression of Unitarian Universalist faith, using Thoreau as an example
- Help participants develop skills of observation in nature as a way to learn about ourselves

- Guide participants to explore the natural cycle of growth in nature

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Explore the practice of picture journaling
- Explore the connectedness of their family home, the natural world, and their faith home
- Become familiar with Henry David Thoreau's life in nature
- Build a home in nature
- Look at nature through a window and draw their observations
- Optional: Transform a public green space through a trash clean-up project

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Preparing Observation Journals	10
Activity 2: Story — Thoreau and the Cottage	15
Activity 3: Through My Window	10
Activity 4: The Web of My Life	15
Faith in Action: Tidying a Shared Natural Space — Short-term	60
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Nature Picnic	60
Alternate Activity 2: Urban Garden	30

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Our material-centered, time-based lifestyle makes simplicity in living hard to imagine. Explore for yourself a time when you feel your life was simplest.

Take a piece of paper and a pencil and draw yourself at that time in your life. Stick people are fine. Draw a few of the things that you did in that simpler time of life. Draw some symbols of your feeling about that simple time in your life. Now turn the paper over and draw your life now. Draw the things that fill your days in this time in your life.

Look at each picture for several minutes. How can you take your life now and reclaim some of the simplicity of

the other time of your life? Promise yourself to take one small step toward simplicity.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated chalice
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- On top of the labyrinth, place the basket of stones.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. The labyrinth should be spread on the floor with the chalice in the center. Welcome newcomers or guests and have extra stones so the new people can be part of the ritual.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to say with you:

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

Tell the group, in your own words:

This labyrinth reminds us that we are taking a journey together. Every time we meet, we move forward in our journey, and everyone is asked to place his or her stone within the labyrinth. Each stone is a symbol of us as fellow members of this Creating Home community.

When it is your turn to place your name stone on the labyrinth, please say your name and share any joys or concerns you have had since we last met. Joys are the things that make you feel happy. Concerns are worries. Sharing our joys and concerns with each other is a tradition in our faith community.

Allow children, one at a time, to step onto the labyrinth, speak their joys and concerns, place their stones, and return to the circle. Thank each participant.

Close the joys and concerns by affirming that it is very good to be together. Say, in your own words:

Today we will talk about looking carefully at nature, and learning from nature what we can.

Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: PREPARING OBSERVATION JOURNALS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Blank journals for all participants
- Drawing and writing implements, such as pencils, markers, or crayons
- Arts and crafts materials such as glue, glitter glue, felt, construction paper, scissors, stickers with plant and animal images

Preparation for Activity

- Purchase or make journals of unlined paper, one for each participant. Leader Resource 1, [Making Nature Journals](#) (included in this document), offers two ways you can make journals.
- Gather arts and crafts materials for participants to decorate their own journals.

Description of Activity

Children will explore the practice of picture journaling. Tell the group, in your own words:

Today we will talk about a man who had a special relationship with nature. Henry David Thoreau left his home in a busy town, and went to live in a cottage in the woods all by himself. Today we will try some experiences to help us imagine what Henry David Thoreau did, and what he thought and felt about nature. Thoreau also took long trips into the wilderness of Maine and New Hampshire, keeping a journal of what he saw in the woods and mountains.

Hold up a blank journal. Ask participants whether they know what a journal is and what it is used for. Affirm their responses. Mention that people use a journal to write or draw about what they see, think, and feel.

Explain that while he was alone in his cottage in the woods, Henry David Thoreau spent much time watching nature quietly and writing in his journals. Say in your own words:

Henry David Thoreau's journals hold many wonderful observations about nature. The things he saw and thought about in nature gave him ideas for how he could live every day in his home in the woods.

Today we will observe nature, too. And we will each have a journal to draw pictures about what we see.

Distribute journals to all participants. Invite them to decorate the cover of their journals. Be sure each child includes his/her name on the cover. You may need to write some children's names for them.

If you have time and the weather permits, take the group outside to sit and draw. If your meeting place does not have its own accessible green space, determine ahead of time where you can take the group to sit and draw trees, grass, or a landscape view. Make sure you have enough adult supervision and any necessary permissions if the group will leave the premises.

If weather is inclement or you lack a suitable outdoor setting, arrange a substitute natural setting such as a planter with plants. You may want to play nature music in the background if you need to be inside. Ask children to sit quietly, breathe deeply, and record in the journals pictures of what they see.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THOREAU AND THE COTTAGE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of story, "[Henry David Thoreau and the Cottage](#)" (included in this document)
- Drawing paper, 11x17" or larger
- Drawing, coloring, and arts and crafts materials such as pencils, pastels, crayons, colored paper, stickers, and glue sticks
- Optional: Small natural objects, such as leaves, suitable for gluing on paper
- Optional: "Henry David Thoreau and the Cottage" coloring sheet, and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review, download, and print out story, "[Henry David Thoreau and the Cottage](#)." (included in this document) Distribute the paper and drawing, coloring, and arts and crafts materials where participants will sit after hearing the story. Large, open containers of pencils or crayons are easier than boxes for children to share and to clean up.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons

where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

Invite the children to sit so that they will be comfortable listening to a story. Introduce the story by asking the group:

- How would it feel to live all by yourself in a house in the woods?
- What would you need in your house?

Allow some responses.

Read the story aloud or tell it in your own words.

After you finish the story, invite participants to sit at worktables, find a piece of large, white paper, and draw, color, and decorate the way they imagine Henry David Thoreau's cottage in the woods from the story.

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "Henry David Thoreau and the Cottage" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 3: THROUGH MY WINDOW (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1, "[Through My Window](#)" (included in this document), for all participants
- Color pencils, markers, or crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Download, print, and photocopy Handout 1, Through My Window.
- Arrange to use a room where all participants will be able to sit comfortably and look out a window to the outdoors.
- Prepare drawing and writing implements to distribute after participants return from the window to work tables.

Description of Activity

Looking through a window and recording their observations by drawing will focus children's attention on nature. Tell the group that Henry David Thoreau observed nature by looking out the window of his cottage as well as by taking walks in the woods. Say, in your own words,

Wherever you live, you can observe and learn something from nature by looking carefully out a window. Even if you live in a busy city on the top floor of a building, you can see the horizon never changing, the location of the sun and moon, and the changing cloud formations.

Take the children to a window. Ask:

- Why do you think buildings have windows?

Most children will understand a window's primary function: to let light inside. Point out, also, that windows allow us to see outside. Invite them to call out any natural events they can see outside the window. Guide them to look for:

- Insects and insect homes just outside the window
- Any clouds, or the skyline
- Condensation on the window
- Erosion in the Earth below, a sign of wind or animal life passing through the area

Allow time for silent observation, and more conversation about what the children can see of nature outside the window. As the children look out the window, encourage them to share what they see and to talk about what it makes them think about, what it means to them, and how it makes them feel. Then, ask children to return to their worktables. Distribute handouts and drawing implements and invite children to fill the window on the handout with what they have seen.

You may wish to send another handout home so children can draw what they see out a window at home.

ACTIVITY 4: THE WEB OF MY LIFE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Pieces of corrugated cardboard or poster board, about 12 inches square, for all participants
- Push pins with cylindrical tops
- Stickers
- Yarn
- Markers and/or crayons
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain sheets of corrugated cardboard or another substance that will hold a push pin. Cut a 12-inch square piece for each participant.

- Obtain push pins, at least five for each participant. The push pins need to have cylindrical tops, big enough to hold the multiple strands of yarn a child will wind around them.
- Cut pieces of yarn, at least three feet long, for each participant.
- Obtain stickers that participants may choose to represent their family home, faith home, school, and other important locations in their lives.

Description of Activity

Children will explore the connectedness of their family home, their faith home, and other important settings in their lives by making a web in the style of a spider web. They will use yarn to make a web that shows how their different "homes" connect.

Say, in your own words:

A spider's web connects several places together. The spider moves around on the web, and uses the web to eat and grow. Did you know there is a web in your life that helps you eat and grow?

We are going to make a web that shows how the different homes in your life are connected, and includes other places that are important as you live and grow.

Distribute the 12-inch squares of corrugated cardboard and a piece of yarn to each child. Set push pins, stickers, and markers or crayons at children's work tables.

Ask the children to choose a push pin to stand for themselves. (If you have done Session 2: Symbols of Faith, you can reinforce their understanding of the word "symbol" by using it here.) Suggest they place themselves in the center of their cardboard. Show them how to stick the push pin in firmly.

Now invite the children to place a push pin in the corrugated cardboard to represent their family home and mark that spot with a sticker. Next, ask them to push a pin into the cardboard to represent their faith home and place a sticker there. Then, ask them to push a pin into the cardboard to represent their school and add a sticker. Some children may be home-schooled; invite them to give "school" its own push pin. You can explain that going to school is a special part of the web of their lives, and different from other kinds of things they do in their family home.

Some children — for example, those who have two custodial parents living in different homes — may want to use additional pins. Encourage all the children to think of a few more places they go regularly that are important to them and help them grow. You may say:

Some people spend so much time someplace outside their home that they might say, "I like to read so much that the library is like my second home," or "The swimming pool is like my second home." Some children have a grandmother or an aunt or an uncle or a family friend whose house they spend a lot of time at. Maybe some of you have a place that is almost like another home for you.

You may wish to prompt discussion with these questions:

- Where do you go to make sure your body can grow strong? Where do you get exercise? (a playground, sport or dance practice, a YMCA) Where do you get food? (a grocery store, a farmer's market)
- Where do you go to help your friendships grow? (a regular play date, a playground, an after-school program, a friend's house)
- What about helping your mind grow, and learning different kinds of things than you learn here or in your family home or in school? (art or music lessons; clubs such as 4H, Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts; the home or work place of a relative or family friend)

Once all children have placed and marked their push pins, show the group how to wind yarn around all of the pins to make a web. Tell them they can wind the yarn any way they wish to show how the different places are connected to them.

When all the yarn is gone, explain that this is how we build a web of relationship between the people in our lives and the homes we live in. Ask children to share how the yarn connects each place in their lives.

Including All Participants

Some children may have more than one family home, for example, if divorced parents share custody. Children of interfaith families may have a connection to another faith home along with your Unitarian Universalist congregation. Some children may have multiple extracurricular activities that are meaningful for them; others may have none. As you give directions for this activity, be sensitive to these possibilities and others. Allow children to use as many push pins as the web of their lives requires.

Avoid using stickers with images that represent specific kinds of families or homes. Families and homes differ widely.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, bold markers, and tape
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the words "cottage," "journal," and "nature" with bold marker on index cards.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Tell the group that it is now time to share a closing ritual. Relight the chalice.

Invite the children to take their stones from the labyrinth and return them to the basket. Then, ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

If you have a Word Wall, tell participants:

The words for our World Wall today are
"cottage," "journal," and "nature."

Show the group the index cards or post-its on which you have written "cottage," "journal," and "nature." Post them on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do so.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite participants to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,

When our heart is in a holy place.

We are blessed with love and amazing grace.

When our heart is in a holy place.

Say in your own words:

Today we have been talking about Henry David Thoreau. We remember that Henry built his cottage in natural surroundings and this became his favorite home. We hope that after our session today, as you go back to doing all the things you normally do, you will also take a moment to observe nature as Henry did. Stop, look, and see what nature has to teach you. We will see you next time.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind participants to give the handout to their parents.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: TIDYING A SHARED NATURAL SPACE — SHORT-TERM (60 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large trash bags
- Latex gloves for all participants (check for allergies)
- A watch
- Optional: Snacks
- Optional: Participants' nature journals prepared in Activity 1, and pencils and crayons
- Optional: Items for closing ritual

Preparation for Activity

- Identify a small park, a parking lot, or some green space belonging to your congregation where the children can pick up trash. The area should be a short, safe walk from your meeting place.
- Visit the site ahead of time. If the area is spread out, or if the group is large, arrange for additional adults to join you to ensure that no child is out of an adult's sight at any time during the walk or cleanup. Identify a spot to be your "base of operations" during the cleanup. Observe whether the area has public trash barrels or a dumpster for the litter you will collect; if you see no receptacles, plan to take the litter with you when you leave.

- Obtain permission forms from your religious education director, if necessary. Distribute the form to parents at least two weeks before the clean-up day.
- Purchase large trash bags and latex gloves. If any child in the group is allergic to latex, obtain alternate protection for that child.
- Optional: If children have their own journals from Activity 1: Preparing Nature Journals, you may like to add 10 or 15 minutes for them to sit and draw after they have tidied the green space.
- Optional: If you wish to have a closing ritual at the end of the clean-up activity, plan to bring the items you will need, such as a chalice. Plan to leave enough time for the closing.

Description of Activity

Ask the children what kind of trash Henry David Thoreau might have found, when he walked in his woods. Tell them he most likely did not find much trash. Say, in your own words:

Thoreau lived on many acres of land by himself. Today, many more people share the land. As Unitarian Universalists, we believe that we have a responsibility to keep our shared natural spaces free of human trash.

Show the children the large garbage bags and the latex gloves you have brought. Explain that some of the trash will have germs, so that everyone will wear gloves while they collect trash in the bags. Tell the group where you will go to clean up trash. Children who know the place may have comments about the litter they anticipate finding there.

Ask children to don outdoor wear, if needed, and walk together to the cleanup location. When you arrive, explain where participants may go, and where everyone will gather when you call them back. Give guidelines about what not to touch without asking an adult, such as broken glass.

Dispatch the children in small groups, accompanied by an adult, to pick up trash for ten or 15 minutes. Then, call them back to rest. Send them for another round of cleaning, if you have time. Picking up human trash can be a spiritually draining experience so be sure to allow time for reflection and maybe some time to swing on the swings or run a relay race.

You may wish to lead some reflection before you leave the site. Gather the children, and ask them to point out the areas where they picked up trash. Invite them to compare how the area looks now with how it looked when they arrived. What would Henry David Thoreau think? In this opportunity for reflection, encourage the

children to share how they felt about this experience, and what they think happened to make this place messy. What can we do to protect nature?

If participants did Activity 1: Preparing Nature Journals, the tidied-up green space might be an ideal setting for a ten-to-15-minute drawing activity. Ask the children to find an object or a view they would like to observe and draw and to sit quietly and comfortably where they can see it. Remind them that by picking up human trash, they have restored the green space to something more like what Henry David Thoreau might have seen. You can invite them to pretend they are alone, while drawing, sitting outside a cottage in the woods.

You could lead a Closing outdoors after the clean-up. Bring any items you want to use, such as the chalice. If this project is part of a regular Creating Home session, when you return to the meeting space ask some children to help you complete the Closing ritual: collecting name stones from the labyrinth, putting away the labyrinth, distributing the Taking It Home handout, and (if you have a Word Wall) posting today's words.

Allow time for the walk back to the meeting place. If you are carrying large, trash-filled bags, the walk back may take longer than the walk to the site.

Including All Participants

If any participants use a wheelchair or have other mobility limitations, make sure the route you will take is free of impassible curbs and other hindrances. If a child is physically unable to pick up litter, assign him/her a role such as timekeeper, or "keeper of the latex gloves." Make sure each individual has a meaningful role in the activity.

Most inexpensive, protective gloves contain latex. Check with parents for allergies to latex. If children are allergic, ask their parents for suggestions as to how to protect the participant's hands.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Henry David Thoreau learned by observation of nature. He had a unique way of transferring knowledge obtained in his natural home to his relationships in the human world.

Take a moment to reflect on the session. What kinds of connections did the children make between themselves and the observed world of nature? How can you strengthen the children's experience of these connections, when you meet again in future sessions?

TAKING IT HOME

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of

life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. – Henry David Thoreau

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Connecting our human homes to nature is something we often try to accomplish. Whether by use of houseplants and fish tanks inside our homes or by using our yard to portray beauty, we immerse ourselves in the healing power of natural surroundings. This week the children explored the life of Henry David Thoreau and had their own experiences of observing and appreciating nature.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Henry David Thoreau built himself a cottage on Walden Pond because he wished to simplify his life. Does your family feel that life is too complicated? Do family members feel they have enough time to sit and observe life, or does it feel as if between the mandatory activities such as school, work and chores and the optional activities such as sports or arts you continually rush from one thing to the next? How does your family slow down and take time together? Are there moments such as a Saturday morning, some time after dinner on weeknights, or another time during the week when you could carve out some "slow" time?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Game

A fun way to practice being a nature observer is to play outdoor "I Spy." Take turns choosing some natural item that you can see in your yard or at a park. Questioners try to guess the item by asking questions of the person who has chosen the item. You may be surprised by what you find in your back yard if you look for something near-to-hand that is not immediately obvious!

A Family Adventure

Today in Creating Home the children took time to do a picture journal, recording their observations of nature. You may wish to go on a family adventure to a nearby regional park to observe nature there. What is the tiniest plant or animal you can find? What is the largest? If you have a portable audio recorder you may wish to create an audio journal of birdsongs or other natural sounds.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Have a look at a wonderful children's computer experience with [Henry David Thoreau](#).

There is abundant information online about [organic foods](#) and [health for children](#).

Children's books on Henry David Thoreau:
Henry David's House by Henry David Thoreau, edited by Steven Schnur (Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2002)

A Mind with Wings: The Story of Henry David Thoreau by Gerald Hausman and Loretta Hausman (Trumpeter, 2006)

New Suns Will Arise: From the Journals of Henry David Thoreau by Henry David Thoreau, John Dugdale, and Frank Crocitto (Hyperion Press, 2000)

Henry Hikes to Fitchburg written and illustrated by D.B. Johnson (Houghton Mifflin, 2000)

Henry David Thoreau: In Step with Nature by Elizabeth Ring (Millbrook Press, 1993)

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: NATURE PICNIC (60 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Quilts to sit on
- Vegetables, grains, legumes, and (if no allergies) nuts in their natural, just-harvested state
- Implements such as a nutcracker or a pocket knife for preparing portions

Preparation for Activity

- Locate an indoor or outdoor spot, away from your usual meeting place, where participants can picnic on quilts.
- Check with children's parents about food allergies. Clarify which foods you must avoid.
- Obtain quilts to spread on the floor or ground.
- Obtain a picnic basket. Pack implements (such as a nutcracker), hand sanitizer, and paper napkins for all participants.
- Purchase fresh vegetables in their natural state (but washed of dirt), such as carrots with their tops, radishes, and celery stalks with leaves and roots, a variety of unsalted nuts in their shells (if there are no allergies in your group); whole grains such as brown rice, oats, and wild rice; and, legumes in their hard, uncooked form, such as black beans, split peas, kidney beans, lentils, or chick peas.
- Optional: Purchase some prepared carrots, nuts, peas, beans, etc. to demonstrate the difference.

Description of Activity

In your own words explain:

Henry David Thoreau's simple way of life included his food. When he lived in his cottage in the woods, he often ate fruits and vegetables and natural foods he could find in the woods

near his cottage. Today we will share a snack picnic and try some of the simple foods that Henry David Thoreau might have eaten when he lived in the cottage.

Gather the group, your quilt(s), and the picnic basket you have prepared. Bring participants to the indoor or outdoor location you have chosen. Settle the group in a circle on the quilt(s). Pass hand sanitizer so all may clean their hands.

Present, identify, and pass around the simple foods you have chosen to share. Explain that food is most nutritious — best for your body — when you eat it in the form closest to the way it is grown. A fresh apple has more nutrition than a cup of applesauce. Applesauce is apples that have been cooked, and sugar and preservatives may have been added to them.

Let children taste some of the foods and share comments. Clean up and return to the meeting space.

Including All Participants

Check with parents to verify all children's ability to eat all of the foods you wish to include. Adapt the menu as necessary.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: URBAN GARDEN (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- One or more clay growing pots (at least 16" in diameter and 12" deep), or a window box
- Potting soil
- Six young strawberry plants or one set of small onion bulbs for each pot
- Watering can
- Trowels
- Newspaper

Preparation for Activity

- Find a sunny spot where you can place one or more large growing pots or a window box.
- Locate a water source near your meeting place. You may need to fill a watering can several times during this activity.
- Make a plan for who will regularly water the plants.
- Obtain one or more clay growing pots approximately 16 inches in diameter and at least 12 inches deep, or a window box.
- Purchase six young strawberry plants per pot, and/or one set of small onion bulbs per pot.

- Spread newspaper where you will plant. Set out the pot(s) or window box, plants, trowel(s), potting soil, and a full watering can.

Description of Activity

Share, in your own words:

In the woods where he lived, Henry David Thoreau would have found wild onions and wild strawberries that he could eat. Nowadays few of us have wild berries or vegetables we can find near our family homes to eat.

Today we will begin to grow some food right here in our meeting space.

Guide participants to place an inch or so of gravel across the bottom of the pot. Explain that the gravel and the hole at the bottom of the pot allow the extra water to drain away, so the soil does not get moldy.

Invite one or two children to help you fill the pot(s) three-quarters full with potting soil. Allow the children to take turns planting the strawberry plants and then adding more potting soil. Leave an inch or two between the top of the potting soil and the rim of the pot.

To plant the onions, push an onion bulb into the potting soil, until the onion is just covered with dirt.

Each time you meet, invite children to observe the growth of the plants. They may want to draw the plants in their journals. When the strawberries or onions are ready to harvest, have a plan for sharing them with the group or with others.

STORY: HENRY DAVID THOREAU AND THE COTTAGE

Written by Tracey L. Hurd.

This is a story about a boy who loved the outdoors. His name was Henry David Thoreau. All his life, he loved nature. It was almost as if he had a small, still voice inside him that whispered, "Go outside. Be amidst the trees, and lakes, and grass. This is your true home." Henry listened to that voice all of his life. This is his story.

Henry lived in Concord, Massachusetts more than 100 years ago. The town had some buildings, but all around there were forests and ponds, rivers and fields. Henry loved being outdoors; he loved to explore. He liked the feeling of being close to the earth, of being surrounded by plants, bugs, birds, and wildlife. Outside, Henry was never bored. He was busy watching, finding, and enjoying nature. Outside, Henry felt at home.

Henry kept notes about nature and liked to share ideas about what he saw. Later, when he was grown up, he wrote that nature was like a nursery (a special room for the care of children) for him. Henry went to school, and church, and he helped with the chores of his family but most of all he loved being outdoors. When he went to bed at night, he placed his bed so that he could look out at the stars. For Henry, seeing nature and knowing that he was part of the world around him made him feel most comfortable.

Henry grew up and went to school and later to college. He read a lot of books. He was especially interested in books written by Transcendentalists, who believed that appreciating the beauty of nature is a way of feeling close to the Spirit of Life or God. Henry listened to that small voice inside him, telling him to spend time outside—exploring in the icy snow or in the summer heat. He became friends with Transcendentalists who agreed that even grown-ups can learn a lot by spending time in nature. Henry hoped that one day he could live very simply in nature. He knew he would feel at home.

One Transcendentalist friend named Ralph Waldo Emerson told Henry, "You should keep a journal about all the things you notice in nature." He also invited Henry to try out his idea of living close to nature. Henry called it his great experiment. He decided to make a very simple home on a large area of land that surrounded Walden Pond. The land was owned by his friend Emerson, who allowed him to live there in exchange for Henry's help doing some repairs around Emerson's house.

Henry decided to build his home as small, simple, and plain as it could be. He wanted to spend most of his time outside; he wanted to feel close to the land. Henry wanted to have time to notice and write about the changes in nature—the birds, the plants, and the leaves on the trees. Henry made a list of all the things he would need to live on Walden Pond. He tried to include as few things as possible. The list included some tools for farming, a bed, a writing desk, a table and three chairs. With the help of his friends, Henry built a small cabin, just one room, ten feet wide and fifteen feet long. He used old wood, bricks from other houses, windows that nobody else needed, to build his small cabin. When it was completed, Henry moved in.

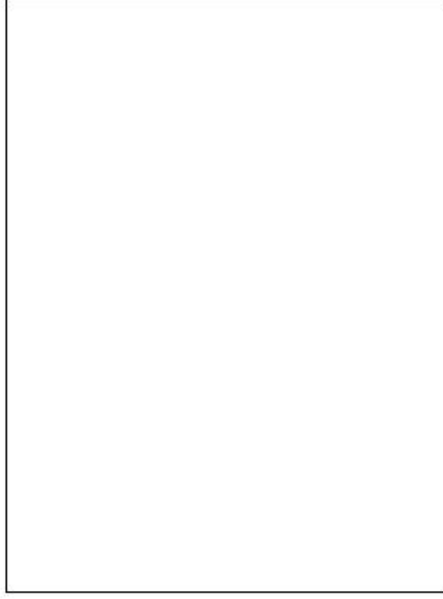
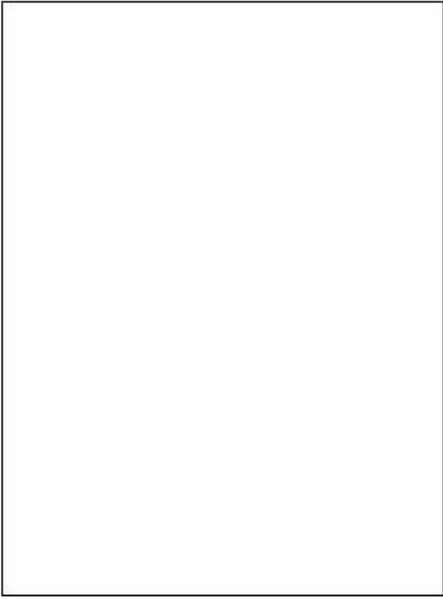
Although his friends and family understood what Henry was doing, townspeople found Henry's experiment in living in nature confusing. They wondered why he would want to live that way. But Henry listened to that small, still voice. He felt at home in nature. He planted food for himself to eat, using a small amount of land. He took great care to notice all around him. He watched the changes in the Walden Pond over the seasons. He found everything from grasshoppers to wildflowers to be beautiful and interesting. Henry wrote in his journal, "I look down into the quiet parlor (living room) of the fishes, pervaded by a softened light. Ah, the pickerel (fish) of Walden! When I see them lying on the ice, I am always surprised by their rare beauty, as if they were fabulous fishes. They possess a quite dazzling... beauty."

Henry lived on Walden Pond for more than two years. He came to town to see people, to work for Emerson, to get some supplies, but mostly Henry remained at his home in the woods. Sometimes people would visit him there. Many children liked his small cabin and they understood that feeling of being at home in nature.

And then, one day, Henry decided that he was finished. He had learned so much from living in nature that he felt ready to try something else. He felt ready to make his home with people again. But he never forgot his time on Walden Pond. He wrote books about it. And he taught other people that caring about nature is important.

Some people say that Henry David Thoreau was one of the most important naturalists (writers about nature) that ever lived. Henry was able to listen to that voice inside him that told him that he was at home in nature. He was able to live his dream; he felt at peace. As he finished his book about his time at Walden Pond he wrote: "I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently [goes] in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors [tries] to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected."

HANDOUT 1: THROUGH MY WINDOW



LEADER RESOURCE 1: MAKING NATURE JOURNALS

Method 1

For each journal, you will need:

- six pages of unlined copy paper
- one page of heavier, card stock paper

You will also need a sewing machine and thread, and some glue.

1. Stack six pieces of copy paper together, and fold them in half.
2. Using a sewing machine, bind the pages together into a booklet by sewing along the fold line, eight stitches per inch.
3. Open the booklet, and glue a single page of heavier, card stock paper to the outside – the page that will become the cover and back cover of the booklet. Do not use glue on the binding edge of the booklet, where the stitches are.
4. Allow the glue to completely dry. Then, fold the cover over the stitched pages to close the booklet.

Method 2

For each journal, you will need:

- a one-inch or smaller three-ring binder, OR three binder rings
- ten sheets of unlined copy paper, punched for a three-ring binder
- one page of card stock, punched for a three-ring binder (if you are using rings, rather than binders)

1. If you are using binders, place ten pages into each three-ring binder.
2. If you are using simple rings, stack together ten unlined pages and one page of card stock for each journal. Then, put the binder rings in the holes.

FIND OUT MORE

Go online to find out more information about [urban gardening](#).

Healthy Food and Nutrition

Online, you can find more information about [organic foods and health for children](#).

Henry David Thoreau

A website called CyberBee offers wonderful [children's computer experience](#) with Henry David Thoreau and a namesake, the bear in D.B. Johnson's illustrated books such as *Henry Hikes to Fitchburg*.

Here are some children's books on Henry David Thoreau:

Henry David's House by Henry David Thoreau. Excerpts from *Walden*, edited by Steven Schnur, illustrated by Peter M. Fiore (Watertown (Massachusetts): Charlesbridge Publishing, 2002)

A Mind with Wings: The Story of Henry David Thoreau by Gerald Hausman and Loretta Hausman (Trumpeter, 2006)

New Suns Will Arise: From the Journals of Henry David Thoreau, by Henry David Thoreau, John Dugdale, and Frank Crocitto (Hyperion Press, 2000)

Henry Hikes to Fitchburg, written and illustrated by D.B. Johnson (Houghton Mifflin, 2000 (hardcover), 2006 (paperback))

Henry David Thoreau: In Step with Nature, Elizabeth Ring (Millbrook Press, 1993)

SESSION 6: HEARTH AND HOME

INTRODUCTION

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up... And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. — The Torah, Deuteronomy 6: 4-9

This session's quote shares a passage in Hebrew scripture that provides instructions from God as to how followers should keep their faith. Not only are the people commanded to love God, but they are also commanded to ensure faith-keeping across future generations by teaching their children, by talking about their faith when at home, and by posting God's commandments "upon the doorposts." Many Jews today do this by decorating their thresholds with a *mezuzah*, a small, decorative box that contains tiny prayer scrolls.

In traditional Judaism, faith-keeping is enmeshed with family life at home. For many Unitarian Universalists, faith and home life are also strongly integrated. We recognize that the gifts of gathering, sharing, and growth can happen in special ways within our family homes. Obviously, learning takes place in many other places, as well, but in the comfort of home, families can stretch and grow together.

The word "hearth" suggests all the best that is home. The basic definition of a hearth is the physical place around a fire or stove. In our times, we may create a hearth around a fireplace in the living room, or around a wood stove. Sometimes the family gathered at the kitchen table feels like a gathering around a hearth. To this day, agricultural people, earth-centered people, and people without the conveniences of stoves or central heating systems may keep a family cooking fire in a central, fire-hardened place on the earthen floor of their homes. In this session, we will look at the ancient human need for the fire of a hearth to give us physical warmth and nourishment. Children will delve into the central story, "How Coyote Stole Fire," using puppets, discussion, and a pass-the-firestick game.

While participants explore the literal hearth, a broader concept of "hearth" also informs this session. The Merriam-Webster [online dictionary](#) offers an alternate definition of the word: "a vital or creative center." The

activities will help children identify the relationships, feelings, and learning they find in the vital, creative center that their own family home provides.

As this session explores the experience of gathering in a family home, negative emotions may arise for some children. In some homes, children feel the absence of a parent who travels frequently. Some participants may harbor complex feelings about gathering with each of two parents in separate homes after a divorce. Be careful not to imply that all family homes always are, or always should be, full of warmth. Listen attentively and without judgment to each child's comments.

This session may spark some children to disclose information about a potentially dangerous situation in their home. You need to listen carefully. If you feel a child needs to share information about their home that is sensitive, complete your conversation with that child apart from the group. At any time, if you are unsure how to respond to a child's disclosure or how to handle family information they share, talk with your religious education director. Particularly, remember you are responsible to convey relevant information to your religious education director or minister to ensure that the safety policies of your congregation and your state are followed.

GOALS

This session will:

- Explore how the act of gathering together unites the members of a family home
- Demonstrate how good relationships within our homes help us work and learn together
- Explore the relationships between humans and animals
- Engage participants in an investigation of why warmth is an important part of family and faith homes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Make a hearth to take home
- Hear a Native American story of Coyote and fire that emphasizes the warmth needed by all humans
- Retell the story, using puppets
- Learn "This Little Light of Mine," Hymn 118 in *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Explore flames
- Participate in a relay that emphasizes working together

- Optional: Participate in an activity that joins their faith with aid to animals

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: A Home Hearth	25
Activity 2: Story — How Coyote Stole Fire	5
Activity 3: Making Coyote Finger Puppets	15
Activity 4: Singing "This Little Light of Mine"	5
Faith in Action: Helping the Humane Society — Long-term	10
Faith in Action: Blessing the Animals — Long- or Short- term	20
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Candlestick Fruit Salad	10
Alternate Activity 2: Clay Animals	15
Alternate Activity 3: Fire Stick Relay	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

To prepare yourself spiritually for this Creating Home journey, sit in a comfortable position on the floor or in a chair. Close your eyes and think about a time you sat in front of a fireplace or a campfire. If you have had few experiences with an open fire, you may want to light a candle and look at the flame while you consider these questions.

Think about the colors of the flames in a fire. How do they change? Think about the warmth of the fire. Does this warmth permeate your whole being? When you are warmed by a fire, are you more receptive to new ideas? As the flame continually changes, do you feel pressured by the changes?

Now think about food. Think about the nourishment of warm milk, or your favorite soup. These foods were warmed by the heat of a stove, oven or microwave, which are sources of warmth in today's kitchens. How does warm food restore your equilibrium?

Lastly, think about where your family gathers in your home. Is the kitchen a place of warmth and cooking or a place of gathering? Why, or why not? Open your eyes. Stretch and embrace all that this session has to offer.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter or matches
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- Place the basket of stones on top of the labyrinth.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth.

Be aware of guests or newcomers. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to recite with you:

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

In these words or your own, say:

This labyrinth reminds us that we are taking a journey together. Every session is yet another portion of that journey. Each time we meet, everyone will be asked to place his or her stone within the labyrinth. Each stone is a symbol of us as fellow members of this Creating Home community.

Please say your name and share any joys or concerns you have had since we last met. Joys are the things that make you feel happy and concerns are worries. Sharing our joys and concerns with each other is a tradition in our faith community.

Allow children, one at a time, to step onto the labyrinth, speak their joys and concerns, place their stones, and return to the circle. Thank each participant.

Ask the children how it feels to gather around a common place, as they are doing together now in Creating Home. Ask if they ever gather at a place at home. If no answers are forthcoming, ask specifically about in the kitchen, around a table where people eat together, or even in front of a television. Tell the children that in today's session, they will talk about gathering around a place in a family home.

Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: A HOME HEARTH (25 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bag(s) of powdered plaster of Paris
- Plastic tarp to cover floor
- Wooden paint stirrers for mixing plaster of Paris
- Large plastic containers with tight lids
- Plastic measuring cups from ground coffee or powdered laundry detergent
- Aluminum pie tins for all participants
- A permanent marker
- Votive candle holders or tea lights for all participants
- Stones for participants to decorate their "hearths"

Preparation for Activity

- Purchase plaster of Paris, enough to mix wet plaster to fill each child's pie tin a third full.
- Obtain plastic sheeting or non-porous drop cloths. Use these to cover the work area.
- Obtain several plastic buckets that have tight-fitting lids such as ice cream or food storage containers; wooden paint stirrers; and plastic scoops such as those found in cans of ground coffee and boxes of laundry detergent.
- Obtain enough aluminum pie tins and votive candle holders or tea lights for all participants, and an assortment of stones to decorate "hearths."
- Shortly before your session, mix plaster of Paris with water in the plastic container(s) by following the package instructions. Cover the container(s) tightly and store the wet plaster at room temperature.

Description of Activity

Ask if any of the children have ever heard of a hearth. Allow responses. Then, say in your own words:

Long ago a hearth was the place in a home where people kept a fire burning, sometimes all day and all night. The fire was used for cooking and staying warm. It was the place where people in a family would naturally gather.

Do any of you have something like that, where you live now? Do you have a hearth in your family home?

Participants may offer, or you may suggest, a kitchen stove, a fireplace, a wood stove, a dining room table with candles lit for dinner, or an electric heater. Tell the group that even if their family home doesn't have a hearth, they will be able to gather with people in their home around the hearth they'll make today. Say, in your own words:

Today you will make an old-fashioned kind of hearth, a hearth like those made by Earth-centered peoples since ancient times. Earth-centered people lived in harmony with nature; they gathered or grew all their food from nature, made all their homes from what they gathered from nature, and honored the spirit of life that they believed was in all natural beings and things.

Earth-centered cultures have for centuries created home hearths by compacting earth or using stone rings. The home hearth was a place for cooking, gathering, warmth and family life. The hearth was usually centered in the structure so that smoke from the fire rose through an opening in the roof or top of the structure. People often added stones around their hearths.

Write each child's name in permanent marker on the bottom of an aluminum pie tin. Distribute the pie tins, and demonstrate how to fill a pie plate one third full with the pre-mixed plaster, using a plastic measuring cup.

As children fill their pie tins with plaster, distribute the votive candle holders or tea lights. Invite participants to place theirs firmly into the plaster in the middle. Provide the stones you have brought, and allow participants to choose a few to press into the plaster, deep enough so the plaster will harden around them.

"Hearths" may not be completely dry when your session ends, but they will dry overnight. Encourage children to put the hearth in a central place in their family homes, a place where family members gather, such as a table where people eat together.

You may mention to parents when they pick up their children that they can light a flame in their home hearth

during times of gathering. The Taking It Home section for this session also mentions the hearth.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — HOW COYOTE STOLE FIRE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of story, "[How Coyote Stole Fire](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: A plaster of Paris hearth made in Activity 1: [A Home Hearth](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: "[How Coyote Stole Fire](#)" [coloring sheet](#), and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story, "How Coyote Stole Fire."
- Decide whether you will tell the short or longer version. Print out the story, and prepare to tell the story in your own words so you do not have to read directly from the page.
- Optional: Learn more about the role of the coyote in Native American cultures from web links and books provided in the Resources section under "Find Out More."
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle. In the center of the circle you may wish to place a hearth made by one of the children in Activity 1: A Home Hearth.

Say in your own words:

Earth-centered traditions had little separation between their home life and their faith life. When darkness came, with no electricity to keep lights burning, people would sit together around a hearth and tell stories for education and entertainment. People from these traditions still gather around fire to tell these stories which are about what they value and believe. Some of these old stories hold truth for us today, as well.

Tell the group that this Native American story gives us a way to think about the warmth that all humans need. Read aloud or tell in your own words the version of "How Coyote Stole Fire" that you have chosen.

Pause after reading or telling the story. Guide a discussion using these questions:

- Why did the humans need fire?

- Why did Coyote want to help?
- Why did the Fire Beings want to keep the fire?
- How did Coyote steal the fire?
- What did Wood do? How did Wood help bring fire to the humans?

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "How Coyote Stole Fire" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 3: MAKING COYOTE FINGER PUPPETS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1, [Coyote Finger Puppets](#) (included in this document)
- Copies of story, "[How Coyote Stole Fire](#)" (included in this document) (short version) for all participants
- Color markers or crayons
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors)
- Cardboard rolls from paper towels or gift wrap
- Glue sticks and clear tape

Preparation for Activity

- Collect the cardboard rolls from paper towels or gift wrap. Cut the rolls into segments 2" long. You can give each child one segment to make one puppet, or six segments to make all of the puppets.
- Print out Handout 1, Coyote Finger Puppets. Photocopy for all participants.
- Pre-set worktables with scissors, markers or crayons, glue sticks, and clear tape.
- Make a "practice" finger puppet so you can easily show participants how to do it.
- Photocopy the short version of story, "How Coyote Stole Fire," for all participants to take home with their finger puppets.

Description of Activity

Gather the children at worktables. Invite them to make their own puppets. Tell them they can use the puppets to pretend to be characters in the story, "How Coyote Stole Fire."

Distribute Handout 1, Coyote Finger Puppets. Help the children name each of the six characters: Coyote, a Fire Being, Squirrel, Chipmunk, Frog, and Wood.

Invite children to begin coloring the puppet figures. Visit each child and offer to help cut out their puppets.

Demonstrate how participants can use glue sticks to attach the figures to the cardboard roll segments, and then secure the figure to the cardboard with clear adhesive tape.

Allow the children time to play with their finger puppets. Invite them to act out parts of the story.

Give each child a copy of the story to take home, along with their finished finger puppets and materials to complete unfinished figures at home.

ACTIVITY 4: SINGING "THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE" (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- One copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Birthday candles for all participants
- Optional: Matches or lighter, and tin foil

Preparation for Activity

- Review "This Little Light of Mine," Hymn 118 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. If you wish, arrange for a volunteer to provide musical accompaniment or teach the song for you.
- If you will light the children's birthday candles, provide each child with a square of aluminum foil with which to make a candle holder, or wrap each birthday candle in a makeshift candle holder ahead of time.

Description of Activity

Children will sing "This Little Light of Mine," an African American spiritual sung in many different faith homes. Children may already know the song.

Teach the song using the rote method, as described in [Making Music Live](#).

Give each child a birthday candle. If children will make their own simple candle holders, give each child a square of aluminum foil, and show them how to wrap the foil around the bottom of the candle so they can safely hold the candle when it is lit.

Lead children in singing the song while they hold their unlit candles up into the air. This would be a good song to share in worship with the whole congregation.

If you wish, after the children have sung the song, gather them in a circle and light each of their candles. Ask them to hold up their lit candles and step closer together. Point out the amount of light that is generated by all of their candles, when they gather together. Then, ask them to carefully blow out their candles.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, bold markers, and tape
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the words "gathering" and "hearth" with bold marker on index cards or post-its.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice.

Tell the group that it is now time to share a closing ritual.

Invite the children to take their stones from the labyrinth and return them to the basket. Then, ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The words for our Word Wall today are
"gathering" and "hearth."

Show the group the index cards or post-its on which you have written "gathering" and "hearth." Post them on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite participants to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,

When our heart is in a holy place.

We are blessed with love and amazing grace.

When our heart is in a holy place.

Say in your own words:

Today we have talked about how it feels to gather around a hearth and feel the warmth of family. We heard a story from Native American people that gives one explanation of how humans obtained fire to help keep ourselves warm and cook food together. As you take home your projects from today, let's add the words "hearth" and "gathering" to our Word Wall to remind us of what we learned. May your days and nights be filled with warmth until we gather again to learn more about creating home.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind participants to give the handout to their parents.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: HELPING THE HUMANE SOCIETY — LONG-TERM (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Visual materials, such as posters, from the national or your local Humane Society
- Optional: Computer with internet access
- Parental permission forms for all participants if you are going off-site

Preparation for Activity

- Go online to learn about the [Humane Society of the United States](#). Click on Legislation and Laws for a list of current projects.
- Investigate the project ideas and educational resources provided by the Humane Society of the United States' [youth education affiliate organization](#).
- Call the Humane Society nearest you. Contact a volunteer coordinator or a public relations person to learn how the Creating Home

participants can help the organization's efforts to protect animals and/or place them in family homes.

- Obtain visual materials, such as a Humane Society poster, to help you explain to children what the Humane Society is and does. You may be able to request these from your local Humane Society. If you have access to a computer and internet in your meeting space, preview Humane Society websites and bookmark some to show your group. Note: Some web pages are geared toward children. Others display images of animals in pain or discomfort that may disturb or confuse children. Preview any web pages you plan to show.
- Decide whether you will do an activity within your meeting time and place — such as making posters, coloring flyers, or stuffing envelopes for a mailing — or an activity that involves an off-site experience. Before you make a plan to go off-site, secure commitments from parents or other congregants to provide transportation and supervision for the date/time you have in mind.
- If you will go off-site, distribute permission forms to the parents of all participants at least two weeks before the scheduled activity.

Description of Activity

Gather your group. Tell participants about the Humane Society, in your own words or these:

In 1954 the Humane Society became an organization in the United States that advocates for animals of all kinds. The Humane Society had roots in many different places around the nation, such as the Portsmouth Humane Society founded in the 1800s in New Hampshire.

Two Unitarians were members of their Humane Societies. One was James Freeman (1759-1835), the first preacher to identify himself as Unitarian. Ralph Waldo Emerson was also a member of a Humane Society. The present Humane Society of the United States brought all the local chapters together.

FAITH IN ACTION: BLESSING THE ANIMALS – SHORT-TERM (20 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

Tell the group in your own words:

A man named Francis lived in Europe, many years ago. He became devoted to making his

life religious. He loved all animals and took care of them. In the Catholic faith tradition, Francis is remembered as St. Francis of Assisi. For people who follow the Catholic faith, St. Francis is the patron saint of animals and the environment.

Each year in October, many Catholic churches sponsor a blessing of the animals service, in honor of the memory of St. Francis of Assisi and to continue his work of respecting and caring for animals. Many Unitarian Universalist congregations also hold a blessing of the animals. They invite people to bring their animals to the faith home to share in a blessing.

If your congregation already plans to hold a blessing of the animals in October, or at another time, engage the group in promoting this event. Children can make or color a poster, flyers, or invitations. Encourage them to bring their own pets for a blessing on the appointed day.

If your congregation does not hold a blessing of the animals, engage participants in planning such an event. What would the event look like? What animals could come? What would be good blessings to offer our animals?

Invite your religious director or minister to become involved. Visit the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations online [Worship Web](#) resource and search “animals” for a variety of blessings of animals.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take five or ten minutes with your co-leader to consider the following questions:

- What went well today?
- What would we do differently in the future?
- How connected are we to the parents?
- How is our collaboration working?

TAKING IT HOME

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up...And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. — The Torah, Deuteronomy 6: 4-9

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Today our group explored the idea of “hearth and home,” including the literal and metaphorical meanings

of a hearth. In addition to building our own hearths, which you can gather around in your own home, we talked about the ways that we share warmth in our homes when we gather together as a family.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER: Talk about...

Hearths are places where people feel warm and safe and cozy. Your family might wish to discuss together what gives each person that sense of hearth and home. What places in your house, or elsewhere, do you feel safest and most comfortable? What clothes give you that feeling? What activities (such as reading stories aloud) make you feel safe and cozy and cared about? What are the times and the places where your family gathers together? Are there special seasons or holidays when that sense of "hearth and home" is especially strong? Are there ways that you might bring more of those special practices into your day-to-day family life, so that the sense of warmth and comfort is expanded?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Ritual

If your child has brought home a "hearth" he/she made in Creating Home, consider making a family ritual around this object. When family members gather for a meal or simply to be together in your home, you can light a candle in the hearth. The light echoes the ancient uses of a family home hearth for the tangible warmth of a cooking and heating fire and the intangible warmth of being together.

Your hearth-lighting ritual may include a simple blessing that family members can learn to recite together. You may say:

Thank you, Great Spirit, for the roof over our heads, the food we eat, and being together.

Or:

We give thanks for the sky above us, the earth beneath us, and the love around us. Amen.

Or, create a simple blessing of your own.

A Family Adventure

Many families have pets who are important members of the family, and who both contribute to and benefit from the warmth, safety and comfort of family life. But most communities have at least one animal shelter which harbors homeless or currently unwanted animals. Your family can help create a hearth, or at least a warmer, cozier space, for these animals by gathering up old or unused blankets and towels that you may have lying in the back of closets or cupboards and delivering them to your local animal shelter to be used for bedding.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

[On this website](#), find more than a hundred stories from Native American lore, including "How Coyote Stole Fire."

Here is [another website](#) with more than 1,000 Native American legends from dozens of tribes.

The affiliated educational organization of the Humane Society of the United States maintains a website with [projects, information, and interactive games](#) for children in kindergarten and first grade.

One way to expand your sense of hearth at home is to cook together with children. There are many online sites with [simple recipes to do with kids](#).

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CANDLESTICK FRUIT SALAD (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Bananas, pineapple rings, and pitted cherries
- Bottle of hand sanitizer
- Paper plates

Preparation for Activity

- Cut bananas in half.

Description of Activity

Children will explore flames by making a healthy fruit salad in the shape of a candle with a flame. Give each child a paper plate. Place a banana half, a ring of pineapple, and a pitted cherry on each child's plate.

Invite the children to center the pineapple ring on the plate, peel the banana, and set the banana flat-end-down in the center of the pineapple ring. Explain that the banana is the candle, and now they will add the red flame by putting the cherry on the pointed end of the banana.

When everyone has finished making a fruit salad, they may eat together. While the children eat, engage them in conversation about how it feels when you make food with friends and family or how it feels to eat a meal with people who love you.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: CLAY ANIMALS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Clay or modeling dough
- Small paper plates

Preparation for Activity

- In the Resources section, under "Leader Resources," find a recipe for homemade modeling dough. Or, purchase clay or modeling dough that will air-dry.

Description of Activity

Children will create clay animals to lovingly understand their relationship to the animals that play roles in the central story, "[How Coyote Stole Fire:](#)" (included in this document) Chipmunk, Squirrel, Coyote and Frog.

Give each child a clump of clay. Show the children how the clay is easier to manipulate if you warm it with your hands. Remind children that the animals in the story included Coyote, Chipmunk, Squirrel, and Frog. Ask them to choose one of these animals to mold with clay.

Allow children to make their animals the way they want to, and to start over at any time, if they decide to try another animal. When their creation is complete, ask them to tell you about their animals. Place animals on small paper plates for children to take home.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: FIRE STICK RELAY (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A long cardboard tube from a roll of household aluminum foil or gift wrap.
- Red construction paper
- Glue or tape
- Optional: A stopwatch

Preparation for Activity

- Make a fire stick baton by wrapping red construction paper around a cardboard tube from a roll of household aluminum foil or gift wrap. Secure the paper onto the cardboard tube with glue or tape.
- Locate a spacious, safe place for the group to spread out and sprint as this activity requires.

Description of Activity

Tell the children that they will participate in a relay where the baton they pass represents a flaming stick. By passing the fire stick, children reenact the passing of the fire by the animals in the story, "[How Coyote Stole Fire.](#)" (included in this document)

Arrange the children in a line, ten feet apart. Explain that when Coyote passed the fire to the other animals, he was running. The first person will take the fire stick and on the command of "go" he/she will run beyond the next person while handing him/her the fire stick. Each person will take the fire stick and run, passing the fire stick to the next person.

Use a stopwatch and see if the relay goes more smoothly and/or faster after children try it several times. For variation, children may skip, hop, or take giant steps,

but they must always pass the fire stick backwards after passing the receiver.

Including All Participants

If any of the participants use a wheelchair or have limited mobility, you can adapt this activity by challenging the group to accuracy instead of speed.

Or, add a role that requires a participant to be stationary. Place the children in a wide circle around one who remains seated in the middle; give this Coyote the name "Fire Holder." Instruct each running Coyote to deliver the firestick to the Coyote whose job is to "hold" the fire for others. As soon as the first running Coyote returns to his/her starting spot, the second running Coyote may go get the fire stick from the fire holder in the middle. To vary this adaptation, use the stopwatch challenge and the variations such as skipping, hopping, or giant steps suggested for the basic activity.

STORY: HOW COYOTE STOLE FIRE

Adapted with permission from the version of a Native American folktale on [Stonee's WebLodge: A Native American Lore Website](#).

I. Adapted short version

A long time ago, humans came into being and they loved the world. They loved the springtime with the beautiful emerging green plant life. They loved the summer, a time of berries and growth. As autumn came, the nights became colder and the humans shivered. The children and elders would die from the cold. Winter was a hard time.

One day Coyote wandered by the human village. He could hear the wailing of the humans as they mourned their loved ones who had died in the cold of winter. Spring was finally coming and Coyote heard an old one say, "Feel the warmth of the sun. If only we could have such warmth in the winter to heat our teepees." Coyote was not of the People and had no need for fire, but he felt sorry for the men and women who were sad about the others who had died.

Coyote knew that on the top of a far mountain, three Fire Beings lived. These Fire Beings hoarded the fire and would not share with others. Coyote crept to the mountain to see how the Fire Beings were guarding the fire. Coyote watched the Fire Beings for many days. He watched as the fire was fed with dry things from the land like pine cones and twigs. He watched how the Fire Beings took turns guarding the fire one at a time at night while the others slept.

Coyote went back down the mountain to speak to his friends among the People. He told them of the shivering hairless humans and their need for fire. He told them of the selfish Fire Beings and their inability to share. He asked his friends among the People to help him. Squirrel, Chipmunk, Frog and Wood all offered to help Coyote bring fire to the humans.

Coyote crept back up the mountain. As the Fire Beings were changing the guard for the fire, Coyote leapt up to the fire and took a burning coal. Immediately, he turned and ran down the mountain. The Fire Beings flew after him, clawing to try and get the fire back. One Being touched the tip of Coyote's tail which has since always been white.

Coyote threw the fire and Squirrel caught it. The coal touched his back and his tail has been arched since then. Then Squirrel threw the ember to Chipmunk, who froze in fear. Finally he turned and ran. A Fire Being clawed his back, giving him white stripes forever. Chipmunk threw the burning coal to Frog who turned and ran. One of the Fire Beings grabbed Frog's tail, but Frog jumped and tore free and thus he has no tail. The

Fire Beings came at Frog again and Frog flung the coal at Wood.

Wood kept the coal safe, but the Fire Beings could not figure out how to get the coal from Wood. They yelled at Wood, they sang to Wood, they even promised presents to Wood, but Wood did not give up the coal. Finally, the Fire Beings returned to the mountain and left the People alone, assuming that if they could not release the coal, neither could the People.

Coyote took Wood to the human village and showed them how to get fire from Wood. He took two sticks and rubbed them together. Then he spun a sharpened stick in a hole in another piece of wood. Fire came to the humans and they were never cold again.

II. Long version

Long ago, when man was newly come into the world, there were days when he was the happiest creature of all. Those were the days when spring brushed across the willow tails or when his children ripened with the blueberries in the sun of summer, or when the goldenrod bloomed in the autumn haze. But always the mists of autumn evenings grew more chill, and the sun's strokes grew shorter. Then man saw winter moving near, and he became fearful and unhappy. He was afraid for his children, and for the grandfathers and grandmothers who carried in their heads the sacred tales of the tribe. Many of these, young and old, would die in the long, ice-bitter months of winter.

Coyote, like the rest of the People, had no need for fire. So he seldom concerned himself with it, until one spring day when he was passing a human village. There the women were singing a song of mourning for the babies and the old ones who had died in the winter. Their voices moaned like the west wind through a buffalo skull, prickling the hairs on Coyote's neck. "Feel how the sun is now warm on our backs," one of the men was saying. "Feel how it warms the earth and makes these stones hot to the touch. If only we could have had a small piece of the sun in our teepees during the winter." Coyote, overhearing this, felt sorry for the men and women. He also felt that there was something he could do to help them. He knew of a faraway mountain-top where the three Fire Beings lived. These Beings kept fire to themselves, guarding it carefully for fear that man might somehow acquire it and become as strong as they. Coyote saw that he could do a good turn for man at the expense of these selfish Fire Beings. So Coyote went to the mountain of the Fire Beings and crept to its top, to watch the way that the Beings guarded their fire. As he came near, the Beings leaped to their feet and gazed searchingly round their camp. Their eyes glinted like bloodstones, and their hands were clawed like the talons of the great black vulture.

"What's that? What's that I hear?" hissed one of the Beings. A thief, skulking in the bushes!" screeched another. The third looked more closely, and saw Coyote. But he had gone to the mountain-top on all fours, so the Being thought she saw only an ordinary coyote slinking among the trees. "It is no one, it is nothing!" she cried, and the other two looked where she pointed and also saw only a grey coyote. They sat down again by their fire and paid Coyote no more attention. So he watched all day and night as the Fire Beings guarded their fire. He saw how they fed it pine cones and dry branches from the sycamore trees. He saw how they stamped furiously on runaway rivulets of flame that sometimes nibbled outwards on edges of dry grass. He saw also how, at night, the Beings took turns to sit by the fire. Two would sleep while one was on guard; and at certain times the Being by the fire would get up and go into their teepee, and another would come out to sit by the fire. Coyote saw that the Beings were always jealously watchful of their fire except during one part of the day. That was in the earliest morning, when the first winds of dawn arose on the mountains. Then the Being by the fire would hurry, shivering, into the teepee calling, "Sister, sister, go out and watch the fire." But the next Being would always be slow to go out for her turn, her head spinning with sleep and the thin dreams of dawn. Coyote, seeing all this, went down the mountain and spoke to some of his friends among the People. He told them of hairless man, fearing the cold and death of winter. And he told them of the Fire Beings, and the warmth and brightness of the flame. They all agreed that man should have fire, and they all promised to help Coyote's undertaking. Then Coyote sped again to the mountain-top. Again the Fire Beings leaped up when he came close, and one cried out, "What's that? A thief, a thief!" But again the others looked closely, and saw only a grey coyote hunting among the bushes. So they sat down again and paid him no more attention. Coyote waited through the day, and watched as night fell and two of the Beings went off to the teepee to sleep. He watched as they changed over at certain times all the night long, until at last the dawn winds rose. Then the Being on guard called, "Sister, sister, get up and watch the fire." And the Being whose turn it was climbed slow and sleepy from her bed, saying, "Yes, yes, I am

coming. Do not shout so." But before she could come out of the teepee, Coyote lunged from the bushes, snatched up a glowing portion of fire, and sprang away down the mountainside.

Screaming, the Fire Beings flew after him. Swift as Coyote ran, they caught up with him, and one of them reached out a clutching hand. Her fingers touched only the tip of the tail, but the touch was enough to turn the hairs white, and coyote tail-tips are white still. Coyote shouted, and flung the fire away from him. But the others of the People had gathered at the mountain's foot, in case they were needed. Squirrel saw the fire falling, and caught it, putting it on her back and fleeing away through the tree-tops. The fire scorched her back so painfully that her tail curled up and back, as squirrels' tails still do today.

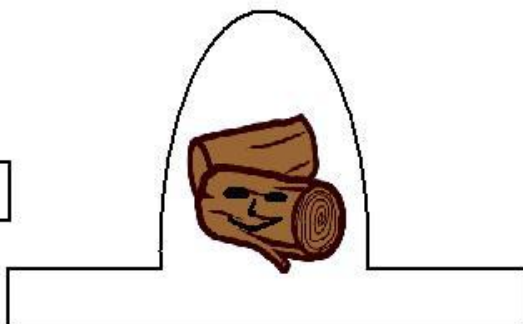
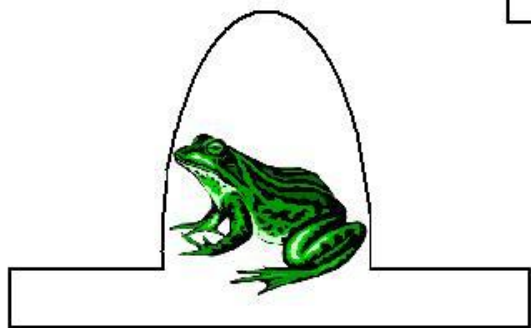
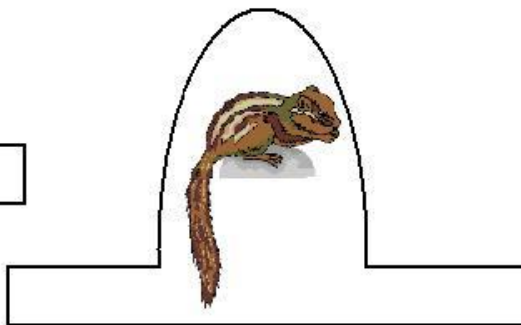
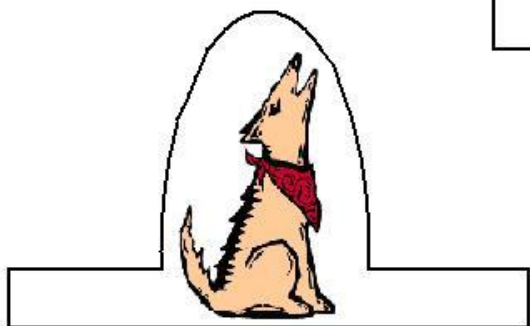
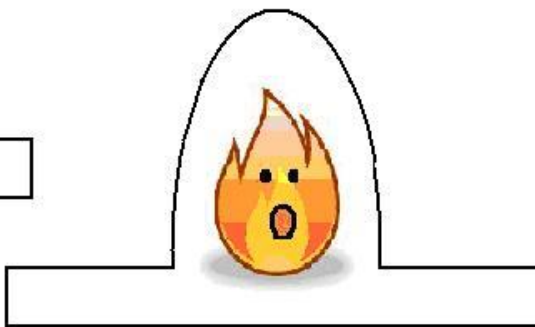
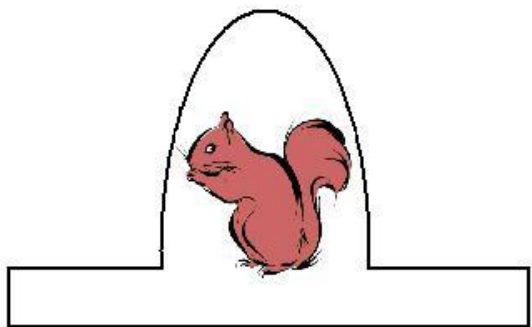
The Fire Beings then pursued Squirrel, who threw the fire to Chipmunk. Chattering with fear, Chipmunk stood still as if rooted until the Beings were almost upon her. Then, as she turned to run, one Being clawed at her, tearing down the length of her back and leaving three stripes that are to be seen on chipmunks' backs even today. Chipmunk threw the fire to Frog, and the Beings turned towards him. One of the Beings grasped his tail, but Frog gave a mighty leap and tore himself free, leaving his tail behind in the Being's hand---which is why frogs have had no tails ever since.

As the Beings came after him again, Frog flung the fire on to Wood. And Wood swallowed it.

The Fire Beings gathered round, but they did not know how to get the fire out of Wood. They promised it gifts, sang to it and shouted at it. They twisted it and struck it and tore it with their knives. But Wood did not give up the fire. In the end, defeated, the Beings went back to their mountain-top and left the People alone.

But Coyote knew how to get fire out of Wood. And he went to the village of men and showed them how. He showed them the trick of rubbing two dry sticks together, and the trick of spinning a sharpened stick in a hole made in another piece of wood. So man was from then on warm and safe through the killing cold of winter.

HANDOUT 1: COYOTE FINGER PUPPETS



LEADER RESOURCE: PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

[Note – this goes with animal shelter/humane society off-site Faith in Action]

[insert date]

Dear Parents of Creating Home Participants,

In our Creating Home program, we have been talking about the responsibility of humans to provide safe, habitable homes for the animals we use for food and keep as pets.

As part of our exploration, the Creating Home program participants will visit [insert location] on [day, date] to [insert activity participants will do at the location]. We will leave together from our congregational parking lot at [insert time] and return at [insert time].

Please detach, sign, and return the form to let us know your child has your permission and will join us.

If you are able to help provide transportation, supervision, and/or snacks, please indicate on the form what you would like to do, and how we can contact you.

Thank you,

[Leader name(s) and contact information]

FIND OUT MORE

For more information about Native American folklore, including more than 100 stories from the teaching lore of Native American tribes, check [Stonee's WebLodge: A Native American Lore Website](#). Other legends about fire from Earth-centered traditions can be found in the book *Hawaiian Family Legends* by Matthew Kaopio (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 2003).

The online Encyclopedia Mythica explains the symbolic meaning of the coyote for Native Americans and the coyote's roles in native folklore.

If you want to know more about coyotes, the [Indiana Coyote Rescue Center](#) has information online including the history and facial expressions of coyotes and how they are presently endangered as well as protected and rescued in the United States.

SESSION 7: BOOK OF RUTH

INTRODUCTION

What is home? A roof to keep out the rain? Four walls to keep out the wind? Floors to keep out the cold? Yes, but home is more than that. It is the laugh of a baby, the song of a mother, the strength of a father, warmth of loving hearts, lights from happy eyes, kindness, loyalty, comradeship. Home is first school and first church for young ones, where they learn what is right, what is good, and what is kind, where they go for comfort when they are hurt or sick; where joy is shared and sorrow eased; where fathers and mothers are respected and loved, where children are wanted; where the simplest food is good enough for kings because it is earned; where money is not as important as loving-kindness; where even the tea kettle sings from happiness. That is home. God bless it! — Ernestine Schumann-Heink

Today's session is about choosing and establishing homes. Establishing a home with a mother-in-law or a friend might seem unusual. However, love and loyalty can be unpredictable. Millions of children in our country are living in homes that reflect a picture different from the mother/father/biological children nuclear family. Whatever their own family makeup, all the children in the group live in a world with increasingly diverse family structures. They will have friends who live with grandparents or with a cousin. Affirming that families can be nurturing and strong with any structure is crucial to raising respectful and empathetic children and adults.

Aside from choosing whom we embrace as family, the stories in this session also touch on choice and necessity as reasons people move from one home or family to another. When children move, they seldom have a choice in the matter. Their families move because of new jobs, a need to save money, or to be near other family members. Children in the group may have moved because of divorce.

Moving is stressful even when we desire it. Leaving behind familiar people, things, or a neighborhood can make us sad. Discovering positive attributes of a new home can help. Re-establishing family rituals in the new setting can help, too. So can filling the new home with items that make you feel loved, items that carry sweet memories and make you feel "at home" no matter where you go. These comfort-giving items are called "transitional objects."

In this session, children are invited to share their stories about moving to a new home (Activity 2: Moving) and to present and tell about their own transitional objects

(Alternate Activity 1: Show and Tell). If you plan to do either of these activities, customize and distribute Leader Resource 1, [Advance Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document), one or two weeks ahead of this session so children will come to this session prepared.

Activities 3 and 4 are designed to be used consecutively. In Activity 3: Memory Game, children match picture cards in identical pairs. In Activity 4: Story — Owen and Mzee, children hear the true story of a rescued baby hippo and an old tortoise that formed a "family" relationship. After they hear the story, you will invite the children to match the picture cards from Activity 3: Memory Game again — not in identical pairs, this time, but in pairs connected by a relationship, such as Owen and Mzee, or Owen and the ocean from which the hippo was rescued.

GOALS

This session will:

- Illuminate aspects of moving and re-establishing family homes
- Help children recognize that people decide where to make their home based on many factors, including loyalties to people or places; family history; the need to live near work, food, and water; and a desire to be close to people or places with whom we feel connected
- Provide a space for children to share their stories and feelings about moving

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Have an opportunity to share personal stories about moving and re-establishing home
- Hear and reflect upon stories of others who have moved and re-established home
- Play a game centered on making pairs, connecting identical and then related images of objects and people
- Make a bracelet to give to a friend
- Optional: Have an opportunity to show and tell about a "transitional object" that they love
- Optional: Help provide for some of the needs of homeless people

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5

Activity 1: Story — Ruth and Naomi	10
Activity 2: Moving	10
Activity 3: Memory Game	12
Activity 4: Story — Owen and Mzee	10
Activity 5: Friendship Bracelets	18
Faith In Action: Making Fleece Blankets for Homeless People — Short-term	45
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Show and Tell	15
Alternate Activity 2: New Home	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Most of us, by adulthood, have lived in more than one home. What have your homes been like? Why have you moved? How did it feel to move?

If you have asked children to bring a transitional object with them today, prepare to lead their sharing. Do you have a transitional object? Did you bring it? Did you have one (or more) when you were younger? Did it make you feel safe? Secure? Loved? Remember those feelings.

You can help the children in Creating Home feel all these things. Meeting with them regularly and speaking with them respectfully and lovingly will leave a lasting impression upon them. You help shape their "home" in this program.

If you brought a transitional object with you, place it somewhere in the room where you can see it but it will not be disturbed during the session activities.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- Place the basket of stones on top of the labyrinth.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth.

Be aware of guests or newcomers. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to recite with you:

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

In these words or your own, say:

This labyrinth reminds us that we are taking a journey together. Every session is yet another portion of that journey. Each time we meet, everyone will be asked to place his or her stone within the labyrinth. Each stone is a symbol of us as fellow members of this Creating Home community.

When it is your turn to place your name stone on the labyrinth, please say your name and share any joys or concerns you have had since we last met. Joys are the things that make you feel happy and concerns are worries. Sharing our joys and concerns with each other is a tradition in our faith community.

Allow children, one at a time, to step onto the labyrinth, speak their joys and concerns, place their stones, and return to the circle. Close the joys and concerns by affirming that it is very good to be together. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — RUTH AND NAOMI (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of story, "[Ruth and Naomi](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: "[Ruth and Naomi](#)" coloring sheet, and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story, "Ruth and Naomi." Print out the story, and prepare to tell it in your own words so you do not have to read directly from the page.
- Optional: For a more detailed telling of the story, look to Hebrew scripture, Ruth: 1-4.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

Children will hear and reflect upon a story in which a father and his grown-up sons both died, and two widows — two women of different ages — stayed together to form a family and move to a new town for a better life.

Gather the group in a circle, and tell the story. Allow the children to explore the story in a discussion when are you done. In particular, the family relationships are complex and may need clarification. Some children may not know the terms "mother-in-law" and "daughter-in-law." You may wish to invite a child who has married aunts or uncles to allow you to use his/her family as an example to illustrate the relationship between Ruth and Naomi.

Questions you might ask about the story:

- Why did Naomi and her husband Elimelech move away from Moab, in the first place? Why did they decide to go and live in Bethlehem instead?
- A long time later, Naomi's husband and her two grown-up sons died. Why did Naomi decide to move back to Moab after that?
- How were Naomi and Ruth related?

- Why do you think Ruth decided to stay with Naomi?
- Do you think it was difficult for Ruth to leave Bethlehem, the place where she had grown up all her life? Why would that be hard?
- What was good for Ruth about the new place she moved to with Naomi?

Point out that Ruth made a big change that was probably a bit scary, but she wanted to do it, because she was loyal to Naomi. In the end, Ruth found a good job in Bethlehem. She made a new home with Naomi and they had enough to eat. Help the children review the story by mentioning some of the things that happened after Ruth and Naomi left their old home. In their new town, Ruth met Boaz and got married to him, making their family bigger. Naomi came to live with the married couple. Then, Ruth had a baby. In Bethlehem, the family grew from two people to four people.

Tell the children that while talking about the story, you have used the word "loyal" or "loyalty" several times. Ask them:

- What does it mean to be loyal?

You may want to offer the group a definition of loyalty. You can say:

Being loyal means you feel and act devoted to a person, or a group that you care about. You can be loyal to your family by sticking up for your brother, sister, or cousin if they argue with someone at school or at a playground. You can be loyal to your soccer team by cheering for the players during a game.

You may wish to ask the children for examples of loyalty, from the story or from their own experiences.

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "Ruth and Naomi" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 2: MOVING (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Customize and distribute Leader Resource 1, [Advance Letter to Parents](#) (included in this document) one or two weeks ahead of this session.

Description of Activity

Children will have an opportunity to share personal stories about moving and re-establishing home.

Use the following introduction, in your own words:

Count how many times Naomi moved to a new home in the story. (Enumerate the moves, including moving in with Boaz.)

How many times did Ruth move?

By now, children have been sitting still for the story and some discussion. Some may be restless. You may want to ask a volunteer to be Naomi and a volunteer to be Ruth. Gently position each child in a different location in the room to represent the places Naomi and Ruth lived in the story.

Now say:

Has anybody ever moved before? Sometimes leaving your old home for a new one can be hard. Sometimes it can be exciting. Would anyone like to tell us about a time when you moved?

If several children volunteer at once, you may want to set the order of speakers. You could go by the order in which their name stones sit on the labyrinth or follow an alphabetical order using the first letters of their names.

As children tell their stories, point out similarities and differences. Thank all the children for sharing their stories.

ACTIVITY 3: MEMORY GAME (12 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Set of 14 picture cards, made with Leader Resource 2, [Memory Game Picture Cards](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Index cards

Preparation for Activity

- Print out two copies of Leader Resource 2, Memory Game Picture Cards. Cut out the individual tiles to make 14 picture cards (seven matching pairs). For heavier, more durable cards that won't reveal the image when they are face down, paste each image onto an index card. (You can also laminate the sheets before you cut them, or laminate the individual cards.)

Description of Activity

Playing a game centered on making pairs helps children exercise their visual memories and prepares them for

the story they will experience in Activity 4: Story — [Owen and Mzee](#). (included in this document)

Show the children the 14 picture cards. Point out that there are seven different pairs: two cards each with images of a hippo (Owen), a tortoise (Mzee), a country map of Kenya, a large fishing net, a turbulent ocean, an African woman representing the general manager of the wildlife refuge, Paula Kahumbu; a young African man in a wildlife gamekeeper uniform representing Stephen Tuei.

Invite children to play a memory matching game. Mix up the matching pictures. Lay out all the cards face down in a grid, four rows by four columns. Children can take turns flipping over two cards at a time, looking for matches. Suggest to children that they pay attention during other children's turns and try to remember where matching cards are located. When a child flips over two matching cards, take the pair out of play. Put them into a common pile to lessen the competitive nature of this game. Play long enough for every child to find matches.

Leave the cards in the workspace and ask the children to join you in the circle for another story.

ACTIVITY 4: STORY — OWEN AND MZEE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- An illustrated book about Owen and Mzee (see "Leader Resources"), or a computer with internet access
- Set of 14 memory game picture cards from Leader Resource 2, [Memory Game Picture Cards](#) (included in this document), the seven sets of pairs used in Activity 3
- A copy of the story, ["Owen and Mzee"](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: ["Owen and Mzee" coloring sheet](#), and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain an illustrated book about Owen, a baby hippopotamus rescued after a tsunami, and Mzee, the giant tortoise Owen "adopted" as his parent in a Kenyan wildlife refuge. The Leader Resources section suggests several books.
- Print out the story, "Owen and Mzee."
- Optional: If you cannot obtain a book, set up a computer with internet access in your meeting space. The Leader Resources section provides URLs for websites with good visual representations of the story. You can show images of Owen and Mzee while you tell the

version of their story provided in the story, "Owen and Mzee." Or, show the group a website that provides the entire story.

- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle. Using a book, website, and/or printed story ("Owen and Mzee"), or any combination, tell the children about Owen and Mzee. In this story, children will hear about two animals who established a family home in an unusual way.

Invite the children to play the same memory game they played in Activity 3: Memory Game, but with a twist. Remind the children that before, they matched pictures that looked the same. Now, challenge them to think of connections between unlike pictures. You may say,

Now that you have heard about Mzee and Owen, you can make some connections that are not about being exactly alike. You can see the connections between everyone and everything involved. We are all connected to each other in ways that sometimes we don't even know.

Spread out the cards so all can see them. Ask for a volunteer to find two pictures that are not the same, but can go together because they are connected by something in the story.

You may need to prompt with an example: Stephen Tuei and Paula Kahumbu both have jobs where they help the animals at Haller Park, so they could be a match. Owen could be a match with Mzee, the fishing net, or the ocean where he was stranded. The map of Kenya could be matched with any other card, since the story occurred in Kenya.

Allow as many children as possible to contribute their ideas. As long as a child can articulate the connection he/she understands, there are no wrong answers.

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "Owen and Mzee" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 5: FRIENDSHIP BRACELET (18 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Stalks of barley, wheat, or another grain, six 18" pieces per bracelet
- Water and paper towels
- Tape
- Optional: Raffia

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain dried stalks of grain, suitable for softening in water and knotting together to make bracelets. If real grain stalks are unavailable, purchase natural raffia; see Leader Resources for sources.
- Soak the grain stalks in water for at least half an hour. Set them on paper towels to dry.

Description of Activity

Making a bracelet to give to a friend engages children in the power of friendship as demonstrated in the stories, ["Ruth and Naomi"](#) (included in this document) and ["Owen and Mzee."](#) (included in this document) This activity also gives participants a chance to interact with natural grains.

Tell the group, in your own words:

The stories we have heard today show how important friendship can be in our lives. Sometimes, we can feel as much at home with friends as we do with our families. Love is the most important element to establishing a home. And good friends do love each other. When you are grown-ups, some of you may have homes where you live with your friends.

Tell the children they will make a friendship bracelet to give to a friend. They will make the bracelet using the stalks of a grain, like the barley Ruth gathered for herself and her mother-in-law. If you are using raffia instead, tell the group you chose this material because it looks like grain stalks and they can make a bracelet with it the same way.

Show the children the grain stalks you have brought. Pass the grain stalks around. Tell them that grains were the largest part of what most people ate in Ruth and Naomi's time, long ago. In many parts of our world, many people eat mostly grain now. Ruth and Naomi had little else to eat beside bread or porridge made from grains. What would that be like?

Give each child six strands of grain stalk to start. Make a knot to hold all the pieces together. Tape the knot

securely to a table or use the clip of a clipboard to hold the knotted end. Tie knots at intervals of one inch or so, keeping the six strands together. Finish the bracelet with one more knot when it is large enough to slip onto a child's wrist.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed upon it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, bold markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the word "loyalty" with bold marker on an index card or post-it.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice.

Tell the group that it is now time to share a closing ritual.

Invite the children to take their stones from the labyrinth and return them to the basket. Then, ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The word for our Word Wall today is "loyalty."

Show the group the index card or post-it on which you have written "loyalty." Add it to the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite the children to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,
When our heart is in a holy place.
We are blessed with love and amazing grace.
When our heart is in a holy place.

Say in your own words:

Whether you were born here, in this city, or
moved here, I'm glad you are here because you
found this place as your faith home. I hope I get
to welcome you home again next time!

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind participants to give the handout to their parents.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: MAKING FLEECE BLANKETS FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE — SHORT-TERM (45 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large pieces of fleece fabric
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors

Preparation for Activity

- Identify a homeless shelter in your area where you can donate the blankets participants make. Find out the shelter's specifications in terms of materials you may use or size of blankets.
- Purchase fleece fabric. You will need two pieces that are 39" x 74" each for a blanket that just covers a twin bed.
- Optional: Invite one or two adult or teen volunteers to help with this activity.

Description of Activity

Children will help provide for some of the needs of the homeless by making knot blankets out of fleece. Children can make the blankets during class or outside of class. You could introduce this activity immediately after the Opening, and allow children to work on their blankets while listening to this session's two stories.

Tell the children that you will make knot blankets out of fleece fabric and donate them to a homeless shelter. Explain that a homeless shelter is a warm, safe place where people can sleep overnight when they do not have a home to live in or their own bed to sleep in.

Use the stories the group has heard, such ["Owen and Mzee"](#) (included in this document) and ["Ruth and Naomi."](#) (included in this document) to give examples of being homeless. Explain that not having a home is a problem that both people and animals can often get help solving. In Kenya, when the tsunami washed Owen's home away, a rescue team, a veterinarian, and the people who work at the nature preserve helped Owen settle into a new home. At a homeless shelter, people find a home for a while when they do not have their own place to live.

You might all work on one blanket or take more time and have children complete a few blankets. These instructions are for one blanket. You will need two large pieces of fleece. Two pieces that are 39" x 74" each will make a blanket big enough to just cover a twin bed.

- Fold fabric in half and cut a 2" square from the two corners that are not folded.
- Cut 2" long fringe around the perimeter of the fabric (along the three open edges, not the folded edge). Make each fringe about $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide.
- Unfold the fabric and lay it flat. Beginning at a corner, tie pairs of fringe strips in square knots (right over left, then left over right).

Demonstrate the knot to the children a few times; then invite them to begin knotting.

Pull knots gently to tighten. If you end up with an odd number of fringes, include three in the last knot.

An extra pair of adult or youth hands in class might be useful. You will probably need to check the blanket(s) after children are done to tighten and re-tie some knots.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

In this session, the group explored who shares family homes together, why families live where they do, and what it is like to move and reestablish home. Did the activities turn out well? Did you feel you had allowed adequate time for sharing, or do you think some children felt rushed? Did children seem to feel comfortable talking in the group? The more the group meets together, the more trust will build. What can you do to foster feelings of comfort, safety, and trust among the children in this group?

TAKING IT HOME

What is home? A roof to keep out the rain? Four walls to keep out the wind? Floors to keep out the cold? Yes, but home is more than that. It is the laugh of a baby, the song of a mother, the strength of a father, warmth of loving hearts, lights from happy eyes, kindness, loyalty,

comradeship. Home is first school and first church for young ones, where they learn what is right, what is good, and what is kind, where they go for comfort when they are hurt or sick; where joy is shared and sorrow eased; where fathers and mothers are respected and loved, where children are wanted; where the simplest food is good enough for kings because it is earned; where money is not as important as loving-kindness; where even the tea kettle sings from happiness. That is home. God bless it! – Ernestine Schumann-Heink

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The children talked about why families live where they do, and what it is like to move and re-establish home. Children heard two stories: the story of Ruth and Naomi, from the Book of Ruth in Hebrew scripture, and the story of Owen and Mzee, an orphaned hippopotamus and an old tortoise that bonded together at a wildlife refuge in Kenya.

Children had an opportunity to tell some stories of their own in this session. Listening to each other's stories is an important way to acknowledge and strengthen the connections among us. Telling our stories allows us, and the listeners, to reflect upon our experiences. Encourage your child to share the events of their life, both large and small, by telling stories.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Like Ruth and Naomi, and like Owen and Mzee, children have their own experiences of displacement. If your family has moved within a child's memory, you may want to talk about how it felt to change homes. Was it exciting? Scary? Sad to leave people behind? Fun to meet new friends? Even if the whole family has never moved house, you may want to share your memories of when you moved as a child, when you first moved from your parents' home, or other times that you've moved. Children who have never experienced a household move still have probably experienced being away from home on vacation or out of necessity. How does it feel to sleep away from home? Is it more enjoyable to go to new places and see new things or to remain in a familiar location with the things and people you love around you? How would it feel different to travel if you knew that you couldn't go back to the place you started?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Game

In the story of Ruth and Naomi, Ruth promises her mother-in-law Naomi that she will follow her wherever she may lead. Playing Follow the Leader is a fun way for children to have the unusual experience of having adults promise to follow them wherever (and in whatever fashion) they may lead. To play, simply make a line of participants. The person in front leads, doing whatever

silly thing they choose, and taking whatever course they choose, while everyone behind does their best to do the same thing as the leader. Every minute or so, swap leaders, so that everyone has a chance to lead and to follow.

A Family Adventure

There are various real-life situations where people and animals find refuge during temporary or permanent displacement. You might want to volunteer at a shelter for the homeless, help serve a holiday meal for homeless folks or assist with a Habitat for Humanity home-building project. Or you might visit a wildlife sanctuary or wildlife museum that rehabilitates injured animals. Even migration is a displacement of sorts, and, depending on your location, a trip to a bird sanctuary or a place where butterflies spend the cold winter months can be a wonderful way to see how animals make a home for themselves while "on the road."

FAMILY DISCOVERY

A website based on [Owen and Mzee](#) offers interactive games, downloadable activities, and a variety of links to other sites that teach children about East African wildlife and ecology.

Your family may also like to look at a [blog by Stephen Tuei](#), caretaker at Lafarge Eco Systems where Owen and Mzee formed their relationship.

You can also [read more about Owen and Mzee](#) online or even get the whole book [Owen & Mzee: The True Story Of A Remarkable Friendship](#) by [Craig Hatkoff](#) as a pdf.

Our Faith in Action section includes opportunities for children to assist homeless people. There are a variety of books for children on the subject of homelessness, including:

Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting (Clarion Books, 1993)

The Cardboard Shack Beneath the Bridge by Tim Huff (Castle Quay Books, 2007)

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: SHOW AND TELL (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Personal transitional objects brought from home by children
- Optional: A transitional object of your own

Preparation for Activity

- One or two weeks ahead of this session, invite children to bring a transitional object of their own to share today. You can customize Leader Resource 1, Advance Letter to Parents. You

may wish to send parents a reminder email several days before this session.

- Optional: Bring a transitional object of your own.

Description of Activity

Children will have an opportunity to show and tell about an object that they love—an item that symbolizes home to them. Children may have brought a favorite blanket or stuffed animal. Perhaps a child takes this item along when he/she sleeps away from home. If he/she were to move into a new home, this would be the most important item the child would want to have in his/her new bedroom.

Gather children in a circle. Invite them, one at a time, to show the group the items they have brought. Ask each child to tell the group about the item. You may prompt with questions:

- When did you get the item? from whom?
- Where at home do you keep the item?
- What do you like about the item?
- How do you feel when you have the item?

You may share your own transitional object with the group, or tell them about a transitional object you had as a child. If you feel comfortable doing so, talk about how, when, and why the item was important to you.

Sharing their personal transitional objects may make some children feel quite vulnerable. Be sure to model respect for every item a child has brought. You may wish to say, in your own words:

Another child's transitional object might not look like much to you. But, to the person who owns it, it is very, very special.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: NEW HOME (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Drawing paper and crayons or markers

Description of Activity

Here is an activity that can help children experience cooperation, shared decision-making, division of responsibilities, and active participation by playing at being a family and making a home with other children.

Form small groups of three to five children. You can allow the groups to self-select, ask them to count off by numbers to form groups, or place the children in groups that you think will work well together.

Tell the children that for the next ten minutes, their small group is their new family. Ask them to decide together

what kind of home they want to live in, where it should be (near a river, near a candy store, near a food store, on a mountain top, etc.), what jobs their home needs done, and who will do these jobs. Invite them to work together to draw a single picture of their home.

Spend time with each group to keep them on track and moderate their discussions as needed. Listen carefully, and help them make (and remember) their group decisions. Encourage the groups to draw the home.

Gather the entire group back together. Invite each small group to show their drawing and tell the others about their home.

STORY: OWEN AND MZEE

Once upon a time in Kenya, on a peaceful river near the east coast of Africa, a herd of hippopotamus was surprised by heavy rain. The rain washed them away from their river home, toward the Indian Ocean. Then came something worse. A tsunami! In the huge, windy storm the ocean waters became strong.

The hippos were in danger. They had to get back to the shore. But the tsunami made the ocean very strong and wild. Most of the hippos did not make it.

When the tsunami came, the people who lived near the ocean were afraid. Neighbors rushed to help rescue fishermen who were out on their boats in the wild ocean. Families ran away from the ocean. They were afraid that the water and wind would wreck their homes, and they wanted to get to a safer place as fast as they could. Nobody was thinking about the hippos.

A few days later, the sky was blue again and the Indian Ocean was quiet again. Many homes had been destroyed by water and wind. People began to clean up and fix everything.

On the shore of the ocean, one survivor needed help. It was one of the hippos, a baby hippo. He was the only one of his family left, and he was standing on a reef in the ocean, all alone.

People ran to help rescue the hippo and many more came to watch. A hippo is very big and heavy, even a baby. And this hippo was also wet, tired, and upset. Would he let the people help him?

(Ask the children how they think the people could rescue the hippo. Allow some responses.)

Here is what they used. Ropes. Cars. Boats. Fishing nets, very big ones. But the baby hippo was frightened and did not want to come along. He was so large, fast, and slippery, nobody could grab him to bring him to safety. Finally, when the hippo was tangled up in a big fishing net, a strong man named Owen jumped on the hippo and captured him.

Kenya has a wildlife refuge where animals that lose their homes in the wild can be safe in surroundings like what they are used to. Paula Kahumbu worked at that wildlife refuge. She came to the ocean to get the baby hippo and bring him to Haller Park, where he would be safe. She brought a veterinarian, Dr. Kashmiri, and an animal caretaker, Stephen Tuei.

With lots and lots of help, Paula Kahumbu and Stephen Tuei managed to get the baby hippo onto their truck. The people by the ocean who had watched the incredible rescue agreed the baby hippo should be named Owen, after the man who had successfully tackled him. Dr. Kahumbu brought the baby hippo to Haller Park.

Baby Owen was confused and scared when they got to Haller Park. Right away, he found someone to protect him. Do you think he found a new hippopotamus mother or dad? Not exactly. He ran right over to Mzee. Mzee was not a hippo. Mzee was a giant tortoise, a kind of turtle, so big he was almost the same size as Owen. Mzee was 130 years old.

At first Mzee acted surprised that Owen was following him around and trying to sleep right next to him, just like a baby hippo would do with its hippo mother. Stephen Tuei wondered what was going to happen. After a few days, Mzee did not seem to mind the baby hippo's company. Tortoises and hippos both enjoy going in the water. Owen followed Mzee when he went swimming, and tried to share Mzee's food, too. Mzee didn't like that so much. But the two stuck together most of every day. Owen became more and more used to his new home in Haller Park. And he always slept right next to Mzee.

STORY: RUTH AND NAOMI

Adapted from Hebrew scripture.

Ruth and Naomi

Once long ago, in the city of Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, there lived a man named Elimelech. Elimelech was married to Naomi and they had two sons, Kilion and Mahlon. The time came when a great famine struck Bethlehem and none of the farmers could produce enough food for the city. Elimelech was no longer able to provide for his family, so he decided they would move to another city, Moab.

Several years after moving, Elimelech died. His wife, Naomi, was taken care of by her sons and their wives, Orpah and Ruth, two women from Moab. Sadly, after living in Moab for ten years, Naomi's sons both died, too.

When she heard that the famine in Bethlehem was over, Naomi decided she wanted to return home. Her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, walked her toward Judah so she could return to Bethlehem. When they were almost there, Naomi turned to her daughters-in-law. She blessed them for looking after her and for having been good wives to her two sons. She praised them for being loyal. She said that they should return home to their families. Neither woman wanted to leave Naomi, but Orpah eventually turned back and went home.

Ruth, however, would not leave Naomi. She said, "Where you go, I will go and where you stay, I will stay. Your people shall be my people and your god my god. Nothing will ever separate us." Naomi saw that she was determined. So the two women returned to Naomi's home town. Naomi and Ruth found a place where they could live in Bethlehem, but they did not have any food.

It was harvest time. Ruth and Naomi saw some women walking behind the men harvesting the barley. The women were picking up the stray stalks that the men left behind. Ruth went to a neighbor's farm and started doing the same. The farmer who owned the fields was named Boaz. He saw Ruth working on his farm, and asked his workers who she was. They told him about Naomi's return and that this was the dutiful, loving daughter-in-law who came back to Bethlehem with Naomi to live with her and take care of her. The farmer, Boaz, because he heard how devoted Ruth was to Naomi, knew that surely God looked kindly on Ruth for her allegiance to Naomi. He instructed his workers to leave extra barley unpicked in the fields to make sure Ruth had enough food for her and Naomi.

Ruth was very happy to be able to gather the barley. She ground the barley and used it to bake bread for herself and Naomi. When she told Naomi that the barley was collected from the farm of a kind man named Boaz, Naomi realized that Boaz was a cousin of her own husband, Elimelech, who had died so long before.

Boaz had also realized that Ruth had been married to Kilion, one of his own relatives. He saw how loyal Ruth was to Kilion's family, even after Kilion died. He could see her loyalty in the way she took care of Naomi.

Boaz felt responsible to help, and he enjoyed being with Ruth, so he asked her to marry him, and she said "yes." After Boaz and Ruth married, Naomi lived with them. When Boaz and Ruth had a little son, Naomi helped take care of him as a grandmother.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: ADVANCE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Families:

Next session, we will talk about re-establishing homes. Children will have an opportunity to tell their stories about moving. If your child has moved from one home to another during their memory, you might help prepare them by asking to hear their stories about moving and adding your own memories. If you have photographs, feel free to send them to this session with your child.

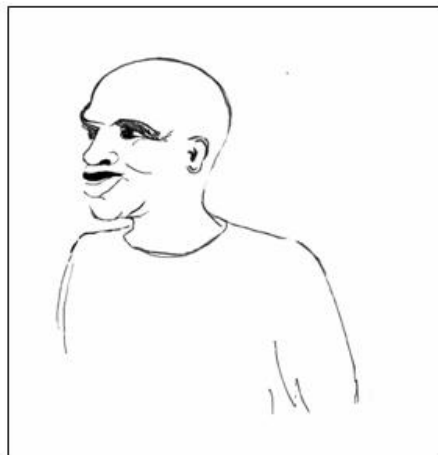
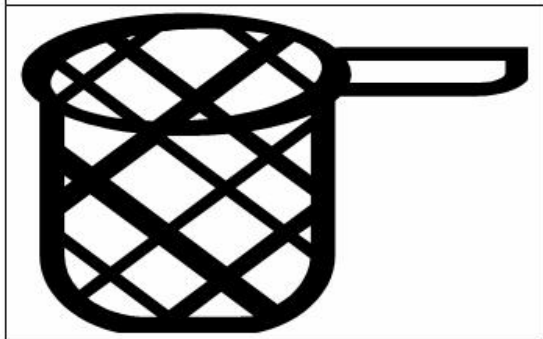
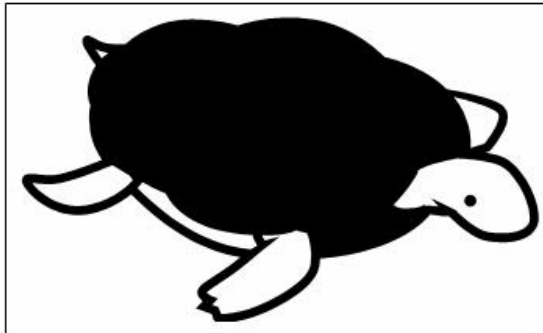
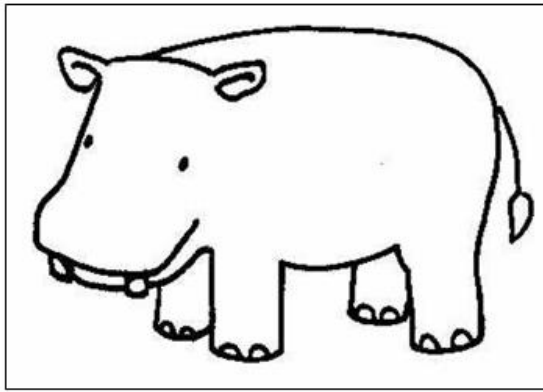
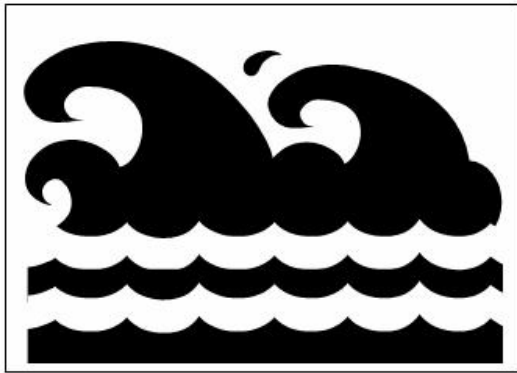
Children will also have a show-and-tell time to share their “transitional objects.” These are items, such as security blankets, stuffed animals, or caps, that your child strongly identifies with home. A child might sleep with one of these items or keep it on their bed or in their bedroom. A child might take the item along on sleepovers or long trips. If your child were to move today, this would be the item he/she would make sure survives the move safely.

If your child has such an item and would like to share their transitional object with the group, they may bring it to the next session. You can prepare your child with a conversation about how they obtained the item, where they keep it, and any other story that involves the object. This will help your child be ready to share during our “show and tell” activity.

Thank you for your help!

[Co-leaders]

LEADER RESOURCE 2: MEMORY GAME PICTURE CARDS



FIND OUT MORE

If your congregation has children's Bibles, you may like to have one on hand for children who wish to read another version of the Book of Ruth, Chapters 1-4.

Read or hear [National Public Radio's original report](#) about Owen and Mzee online.

Stephen Tuei cares for Owen and Mzee at Haller Park, part of Lafarge Ecosystems in Kenya. He works with the animals every day and knows a lot about them. Follow Stephen's experiences and see photos of life at the nature preserve on his [blog](#).

In Activity 5, children make bracelets from grain stalks. Crafts made from wheat or other grains have quite a tradition, tied to celebrating the harvest. The website of Many Hands Gallery in Eureka, California, provides information about [wheat weaving](#).

SESSION 8: HARE'S GIFTS

INTRODUCTION

The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen. Together, our vision widens and strength is renewed. — Mark Morrison-Reed

This session explores how people co-create our community homes together. The central story is an African folktale of how Hare created the first village. Instead of the word "village," this session uses "community." In the story, Hyena builds a home that is lovely, but isolated. Hare builds a home that welcomes a community of friends to make their homes nearby. Hyena throws a party to show that he can afford to provide the best of everything for his guests. Hare throws a party that involves everyone in the community providing for one another.

Like Hare's house-building party, our faith communities, at their best, are open and inviting places where we feel that we and our personal contributions are welcome. The appreciative responses of others foster our sense of belonging. We gain the fellowship of friends, and encouragement to serve the community and express our sense of belonging to and caring about it by bringing forth our gifts. When we belong to a faith community, we have opportunities to experience and acknowledge the gifts of other members.

In this session, games and other playful activities invite participants into the Creating Home community. The Faith in Action activities offer ways for participants to help and appreciate other members of the faith community.

There are many different characteristics of community you could discuss. In this session you will focus on "co-creating" community, which is how members of a community work together to share responsibility for all the functions of the community. To help you model co-creating community, several activities in this session are designed for you to lead with other adults or youth from your congregation or the community.

The quote that opens this session comes from Reverend Mark Morrison-Reed, a Canadian Unitarian Universalist and the author of *Black Pioneers in a White Denomination*. As Unitarian Universalists, we are quite aware that creating an environment that respects the individual while also supporting the community is not always easy. Yet we do not doubt that the effort is worthwhile. This session can lay the groundwork for children, as they grow up, to feel intentional and positive about being in community in their Unitarian Universalist congregations.

GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce communities as places within which we can also establish homes, places where people are together for a purpose
- Introduce the term "giving gifts" to describe a way of being in service to the communities to which we belong
- Help children experience how we co-create community by doing things together
- Provide an opportunity for children to have their gifts appreciated and to appreciate the gifts others bring to the group

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Experience cooperation in playing group games
- Learn about community as a gift after hearing the story, ["Hare's Gifts"](#) (included in this document)
- Make music individually and together as a community activity
- Optional: Learn more about one another and explore ways to have fun together
- Optional: Learn about their congregational community, and provide a service to adult congregants

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Animal Charades	10
Activity 2: Story — Hare's Gifts	15
Activity 3: Creating Our Own Community	5
Activity 4: Making a Log Drum	15
Activity 5: Sound and Motion	5
Faith In Action: Distributing Congregational Member Directories — Short-term	20
Faith In Action: Showing Our Appreciation — Long-term	5
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Freeze Dance	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

The two animals in this session's central story made different decisions about where to build their homes. Hyena built his home in isolation, Hare in community. Just as we struggle as a society with balancing the rights of the individual with the needs of the group, many of us struggle personally with balancing time for ourselves with the time it takes to be in community.

What energizes you? People who are considered introverts generally receive their strength from within and may need plenty of time alone. Extroverts draw strength from being with others. Does either term describe you? Or, do you feel you have a bit of both in you?

Wherever you draw your strength, make sure you are taking care of yourself and finding enough of both the alone time you need and the time to be in community with other adults. Teaching is a great commitment to the congregation. It is also important that you practice self care. To fully enjoy the experience of leading Creating Home, aim to become fully energized before you start a session.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket or bowl of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand, if needed. Be aware of newcomers or guests in the room. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.
- On top of the labyrinth, place the basket or bowl of stones.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. The labyrinth should be spread upon the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand, if needed. Be aware of newcomers or guests in the room. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to say with you:

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

Tell the group, in your own words:

This labyrinth reminds us that we are taking a journey together. Every time we meet, we move forward in our journey, and everyone is asked to place his or her stone within the labyrinth. Each stone is a symbol of us as fellow members of this Creating Home community.

When it is your turn to place your name stone on the labyrinth, please say your name and share any joys or concerns you have had since we last met. Joys are the things that make you feel happy. Concerns are worries. Sharing our joys and concerns with each other is a tradition in our faith community.

Allow children, one at a time, to step onto the labyrinth, speak their joys and concerns, place their stones, and

return to the circle. Close the joys and concerns by affirming that it is very good to be together. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: ANIMAL CHARADES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: A hat or bag containing scraps of paper marked with each child's name

Preparation for Activity

- Decide how you will determine whose turn it is to perform a charade. You may wish to write all the children's names on scraps of paper and place them in a hat or a bag before the session begins.
- Decide how participants will guess what animal is being portrayed. Shouting out their guesses may work fine in a small group, but raising their hands might work better if the group is large.
- Be ready to whisper suggestions to children who need help thinking of an animal they can demonstrate physically, without making a sound. Animals known for specific behaviors or movements work best, such as a cat washing its paws or a slithering snake. Other animals to suggest include a frog, a kangaroo, a dog, a bird, a penguin, a chicken, a horse, a fish, a turtle, or a butterfly.

Description of Activity

Tell the group it is time to play a game. Say, in your own words:

We can play some games alone, but sometimes it's fun to play games with a group of people.

Ask the children, "Who has ever played Charades or Animal Charades?" Explain that Charades is a guessing game. Give these instructions, in your own words:

One person will act out an animal and everyone else will try and guess what animal they are acting out.

When you are acting out an animal, you cannot say the name of the animal, you cannot make a noise like the animal, and you cannot use words to talk about the animal or give clues.

Note: You can make the game easier by allowing children to make animal sounds. Younger children may need the sounds to identify one another's animals.

When you are ready to begin, challenge participants to play without further talking or questions.

Some children may get excited by the competition or become disappointed when their animal is quickly and easily identified. If a child shows signs of

disappointment, praise him/her for acting out the animal so well that it was easy to guess. Remind the group that the purpose of the game is to guess the animals as quickly as possible.

Make sure every child who wants a turn gets one. If a child says he/she does not want a turn, ask if they need help picking an animal. If the child still does not want a turn, remind him/her to ask for a turn later if they change their mind.

If a child picks an animal that is very hard to guess (such as a lion), you may allow the guessers to ask "yes/no" questions to help them identify the animal. Once participants have guessed it, mention that some animals are easier to guess than others because this is a game about how the animals move. Many animals are noteworthy for their special sounds, such as the oink of a pig or the roar of a lion, or for something they do only once in a while, such as a hen laying an egg. Animals, like people, are gifted in different ways.

At the end of the activity, ask the children if they enjoy playing games together. Acknowledge that sometimes we like to play alone, but playing together with a group of people can be fun and can make you feel closer to them.

If you are about to present Activity 2: Story — [Hare's Gifts](#) (included in this document), you can let the group know that next you will tell a story about doing fun things together as a group. The characters in the story are animals, but they talk and act like people, which is common in a fable, which is a type of story.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — HARE'S GIFTS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of story, "[Hare's Gifts](#)" (included in this document) for all reader/actors
- Optional: "Hare's Gifts" coloring sheet, and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story, "Hare's Gifts." The story is provided in three different versions: one for an adult to read aloud or tell, one for two adults to present as a dialogue, and one for multiple reader/actors to present as a play. In the third version, children can perform some roles. Print enough copies of the version you will use.
- At least a week in advance, invite any adult or teen volunteers you will need to help present the story. Tell them what time they need to arrive and provide them with a copy of the story or the online link. Remind volunteers a day or two before the session and confirm that they will come.

- Practice reading the story (or your part) aloud so you will be able to present it effectively.
- If you have a Word Wall, be ready to explain what makes Hare's Gifts a "fable." A fable is a short tale, often not entirely realistic, that uses animals, made-up characters, or famous people to illustrate a moral or a lesson to be learned.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

If the group has just done Activity 1: Animal Charades, tell the children they will now hear a story about doing fun things together as a group.

If you have adults or teens joining you to present the story, introduce them to the group.

Say, in your own words:

This story, "Hare's Gifts," is a fable. The characters in the fable are animals, but they talk and act like people do. Stories that are fables often have characters that are magical, such as talking animals or witches or genies, and they often have a message or a lesson to teach regular humans like ourselves.

Present the story.

After the story, ask the group what the title "Hare's Gifts" means. Draw them out by asking if anyone remembers Hare's first gift to the other animals. Point out that Hare's first gift was bringing the animals together to become a community.

Ask the children if anyone can tell you what a community is, or whether they belong to any communities. You may wish to offer a definition of community as "a group of people living together, living near one another, or having a common interest." Tell the group:

We all belong to many different communities, like neighborhoods and clubs. We have a faith community that is housed in this congregation. When people talk about having a "faith home" they mean that they have a congregation or a temple or church where they feel at home. It is a place where they are cared for and get to care for others. It is a place where they are comfortable being themselves and feel accepted and loved. A place where they are encouraged to give their gifts or their talents and where they can thank others for the gifts they bring.

Offer examples of how people in your faith home give to one another or create something for the shared use of people in the faith community. Will someone bring a snack to Creating Home today? Who sets out food

for coffee hour? Do people sing in a choir to add music to the worship service? Does a greeter or usher assist with worship? Are there artworks in the building that a member of the faith community created?

Invite the children to compare experiences they have had in their shared faith home or in the broader community with the experiences Hare and Hyena had in the story. Do children know anyone like Hare, who makes celebrations happen by inviting everyone to contribute?

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "Hare's Gifts" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 3: CREATING OUR OWN COMMUNITY (5 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

This activity nicely follows Activity 2: Story — Hare's Gifts. If the children are not in a circle, gather them together to sit with you at the labyrinth. Say in your own words:

In bringing friends together to form a community, it helped that Hare knew something about what the animals liked. This helped Hare bring everyone together. Hare knew they would like to live near where they worked. He knew they would like to have their families nearby. He knew some liked to build, some liked to paint, and some liked to hear music. What else did the community of animals like?

Look for responses about eating, having parties, cooking their favorite dishes, making music, and dancing.

Ask if this Creating Home group is a community. Yes, they are! Remind the children that they spend time together regularly. They share a purpose of coming together for religious education time, they care about one another, and when they are here together, they are ready to have fun together, to learn together, and to ask for or give help when help is needed.

Indicate how this community is represented today by the stones children placed on the labyrinth. You may note that the same participants do not necessarily come to each meeting, yet all belong to our community when they are here, even if they are here for the first time.

Tell the children that communities share many things together, but each person in a community is unique. That means every person is different and special, and each might like different things. Ask children to share

some of the things they like to do; allow some responses.

Now invite the children, one at a time, to pick up their name stones from the labyrinth and say one thing they like to do as a community with this group, and then replace their name stone. You may wish to ask each child, as they pick up a name stone:

- What is one thing you like to do when this group is together?

To prompt, you may tell children they can name something they always do when the group meets (such as lighting the chalice), something they did once with this group, or something they would like to do with this group sometime.

After all have contributed, affirm that all the activities and ideas they named help create the Creating Home community.

ACTIVITY 4: MAKING A LOG DRUM (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Empty aluminum cans — two equal size cans to make each drum
- Large roll of plain paper
- Clear packing tape to secure paper to cans
- Scissors
- Crayons, markers, and/or paint and brushes
- Sticks
- Optional: Newspaper

Preparation for Activity

- Collect empty aluminum cans in advance. You will need two cans of identical size to make each drum. You may want to ask families to begin donating their used aluminum cans several weeks before the session.
- Gather enough plain paper to cover all participants' log drums, packing tape, and scissors.
- Set out crayons, markers, and/or paint and brushes at worktables. If children will use paint, cover tables with newspaper first.
- Purchase chopsticks or gather sticks from outdoors for children to use to beat their drums.
- Preassemble some or all of the log drums. Leave at least one unmade, so you can show the group how it is put together.

Description of Activity

Share with the children, in your own words:

Everywhere you look, all over the world, people have drums. People have drums in Africa and drums in Asia. There are drums in Europe, North America, and South America, too. The drums may not look the same, but all drums are percussion instruments. That means an instrument that you strike to make a sound. All over the world, people use drums and other instruments to make music together. Many times when people gather together, they like to make music. Do any of you make music at home? What about here, at our congregation. Do we make music in our faith community like Hare and his friends did in their village?

Give specific examples of music-making from your congregation. Allow a few children to contribute examples. Then say:

Hare's drum was very simple. You can make a very simple drum, too. You can beat on a trash can or the tabletop. We have some materials here for making a drum that resembles Hare's log. So, if you like, come make a drum and after it's put together, you may play upon it.

Place the open ends of two aluminum cans together, and secure them with packing tape, being careful of jagged edges. Tear off a piece of plain paper long enough to cover the cans. Tape one end of the paper to the cans; wrap the paper tightly around the cans until they are covered, then tape the other end of the paper down. Trim extra paper on either end to expose the tin top and bottom of the "log drum."

Demonstrate the sound that is made by rapping the cans with a stick. Distribute log drums that you have made in advance, and instruct children to begin decorating their drums any way they like.

After everyone has finished (and any paint on drums is reasonably dry), distribute sticks to all participants. Ask for a volunteer to tap out a rhythm on his/her log drum. After each child takes a turn, thank the child. Once several children have drummed, point out how unique each rhythm was and thank them for sharing their music with the group.

Lead a short discussion of the benefits of playing individually versus playing as a group. In your own words, share these ideas:

- The individual player gets to present us with the gift of their playing and we can easily acknowledge it. We can hear their beat better because it's the only one playing.
- They can play anything they want to play.
- In the group, someone might like to play a beat that fits in well with what others are playing. It's not as easy to hear your own beat, but the group music is more varied and creates a bigger sound than just one drummer.

- If a drummer is unsure what rhythm to play, playing with others might offer some ideas of rhythms to try.

Now invite everyone to play together, as a community. Encourage the children to try coordinating the sounds of their drums. Then, encourage them to simply "do their own thing."

Set the log drums aside. You may wish to use them in Alternate Activity 1: Freeze Dance later in the session.

ACTIVITY 5: SOUND AND MOTION (5 MINUTES)

Description of Activity

This game strengthens community by helping children remember each other's names.

Gather children in a circle. Going around the circle, ask each child to think of a gesture they can do while saying their first name. Say, in your own words:

The gesture you make with your name can be any kind of movement, and it can make noise. It has to match the syllables or beats in your name.

Demonstrate by saying your own name with a simple gesture, such as clapping your hands on each syllable. As you move around the circle, you may need to help some children calculate the number of syllables or beats by clapping out their names with them. Be prepared to suggest gestures such as stomping feet, nodding the head from side to side, or hopping on one foot. If children seem reluctant, allow them to pass.

After the first child says their name and performs a gesture, ask everyone to say and do it together. Then, after the second child presents a name and gesture, ask the group to repeat both children's names and gestures. Keep building upon each name in this way until the last child has offered their name and gesture. Finally, lead participants in repeating the names and gestures of everyone, as a group. If a child volunteers to repeat all the names and gestures of the entire group on their own, let them try it, and help them as needed.

This game can be played again in later Creating Home sessions, if ever you need an activity to fill the time. You can also use it when the group is particularly rowdy and you feel the need to engage them in a physical activity. You can play the game to help the group learn visitors' names. The better children remember one another's names, the stronger the group identity they will build. The game is flexible and simple enough to adapt to other individual contributions than first names. Children might offer a gesture or movement with "something we do at our faith home" or words from the Word Wall.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, bold markers, and tape
- Optional: One copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the words "community" and "fable" with bold marker on index cards.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice.

Tell the group that it is now time to share a closing ritual.

Invite the children to take their stones from the labyrinth and return them to the basket. Then, ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The words for our Word Wall today are
"community" and "fable."

Show the group the index cards or post-its on which you have written "community" and "fable." Post them on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite participants to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,
When our heart is in a holy place.
We are blessed with love and amazing grace.
When our heart is in a holy place.

Say in your own words:

Every time we come together and place our stones on the labyrinth, we form a community. Being all together in this group is a special time for me. I hope it is for you, too. Thank you for your gift of community. See you next time.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind participants to give the handout to their parents.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: DISTRIBUTING CONGREGATIONAL MEMBER DIRECTORIES — SHORT-TERM (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of your congregation's current member directory for participants to distribute
- Optional: Poster board and markers

Preparation for Activity

- Decide when and where the group can hand member directories to a good number of congregants. If the group meets during adult worship, you could get ready to meet congregants as they exit the worship service, or set up a table at coffee hour. If your group meets at a time apart from worship, you may decide to distribute directories only to families picking up children at the end of the session.
- Check with congregational leaders to make sure there are no objections to the children offering member directories to non-member guests who might be present.
- At least one week ahead, let parents know about this activity and request their permission if children's participation will stretch beyond the regular meeting time. You can download, adapt, and distribute Leader Resource 1: [Member Directory Distribution Notice to Parents](#). (included in this document) Gather copies of your congregation's current member directory to distribute.
- Optional: Plan to set up a table where children can distribute the directories. Invite a few participants to make a sign for the table.

Description of Activity

Many congregations have a member directory. Although these are updated and distributed periodically, people do lose them. New people may also need directories, and sometimes people just forget to obtain one.

Offering a directory to members also may remind them to inform the congregational office if their contact information has changed or if they are not listed in the directory at all.

The congregational directory is like a microcosm of the congregation. On paper, at least, members come together. This project may help remind the congregation of the importance of recognizing one another.

Ask the children if they know the names of all the people in their Unitarian Universalist congregation. If you know how many families belong to the congregation, tell them.

Show them a member directory for the congregation. Tell them that it lists the names and phone numbers of people who belong to the congregation and (if this is the case) others connected to the congregation by friendship, by music, or another way. Tell them people can use the directory to get in touch with others to plan worship and other activities together, or to see how to spell someone's name and address, to send that person a card if he/she is sick or it is their birthday. Maybe children can think of more uses for the directory.

Pass a directory around. Let children look to see if their family is listed. You can help them find their own names.

Explain why someone in the congregation might not have a directory. Tell the group your plan for distributing the directories. You may wish to assign particular children responsibilities such as making a sign, carrying directories to the distribution spot, staffing a table, or walking through coffee hour to offer directories to adult members.

FAITH IN ACTION: SHOWING OUR APPRECIATION – LONG-TERM (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of parent permission form for all participants. Customize your congregation's standard form to provide day, date, start and end times, and locations for both of this project's activities.

Preparation for Activity

- Read the Description of Activity carefully, and come up with some ideas for projects to help children witness and appreciate people working together to create community in your city or town.
- Contact another house of faith in your community. Identify a religious educator or team there to whom you can propose working together on a project that children of the same

age from both faith homes can do together. Share the ideas you have come up with.

- With the other religious educator(s), design a project for the children to do. The project should include a meeting at one or the other faith home for children to prepare for the project, and another meeting in a community setting to do the project.
- With the other religious educator(s), make detailed plans and divide tasks. Plan to check in with your partners several days before each time the children meet.
- Schedule a time for one group of children to visit the other group, in one or another faith home. Secure parental permissions and arrange for adult volunteers to help with transportation, refreshments, and supervision.
- Schedule a second meeting time and place for the actual project. Again, secure parental permissions and necessary help with transportation and supervision.
- Have one adult take responsibility for securing any necessary permission and instructions for bringing children to the community setting you have chosen. This person should gather and share key information such as the availability of parking, wheelchair accessibility, availability of rest rooms, and how the children are welcome to participate.
- Customize your congregation's standard parental permission form. Include the days, dates, start and end times, and locations for both meetings. You may like to provide some information to parents about your partner school or organization.

Description of Activity

Introduce the project you have designed to help the children see and appreciate adults working together to co-create our communities, while they, themselves, work together with other children who represent the diversity that exists in your city or town.

Tell the group they will do a project with children from another faith home in their community. The project will be a way for both groups of children to see one example of people co-creating community. Explain that your city, town, or the cluster of towns your congregation serves is a large community with many people linked together in their daily life. People who belong to this Unitarian Universalist faith home also belong to this bigger community, a town (or city or region) that includes many other people. The people who share the larger community may share schools, libraries, parks, post offices, grocery stores, and other places. Tell the children this project will give them a chance to learn

more about why working together is important for a community, and to show appreciation for the people who do it.

You may say, in your own words:

Just like the community that Hare made, our community has people working together. Every day, people in our community work together to build homes, share food, teach children in school, have parties, and do many other things. People working together make sure we get letters and postcards at our homes, go to school, have clean and safe playgrounds to play on, and much more.

Invite children to give examples of people working together in the community. You may prompt them with examples of the workers who collect trash, people who work at a restaurant, the doctors, nurses, and assistants at a doctor's office, or the adults who set up food for coffee hour or sing in a choir at your faith home.

Tell the children the name of the church, temple, synagogue, or mosque you will work with and any other details you know about the project. If you have permission forms for parents, distribute these now, or tell children (and their parents) to look for them on email.

Identify a religious educator or team working with the same age group at another faith home in your community. Choose a faith home with a population that differs from your own in ethnicity, race, religious beliefs, class, or another way. Propose working together on a two-stage project. First, have the two groups of children meet, play a game or two together, and prepare for the actual project. At a later date, convene the two groups again to do the actual project, out in the community.

Decide the community project together with the other religious educator(s). It could be very simple, such as serving cookies or other refreshments to people working on behalf of the community. One setting might be a polling place during an election. You might put cookies in small bags and pass them out to voters coming out of the polls. Thank voters for doing their part to help co-create a better community. You could also pass out bags to the poll workers.

If no elections are happening soon, you can appreciate others who work to make your community a better place. Pick two public schools, from diverse areas of towns – possibly one near your congregation and one near your partner congregation. Bring refreshments to the schools and serve them to the teachers and staff. Help children understand that though these might not be their teachers or their schools, these public workers contribute toward making our community a better place and hence we all benefit from their work.

These are just two examples. There are many other public servants whom you could honor. Be prepared with several possible scenarios before proposing the

idea to a partner from another faith home, and be open to ideas he/she may suggest. You may both like to engage the children in brainstorming project ideas.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Today's session included a few games or other activities to encourage children to play together. Did you feel they played well together? Is the group feeling like a community, a family? If not, what seems to be missing? If so, do the children recognize themselves to be a community?

How can you be more aware of the dynamics of the group in future sessions to encourage cohesion? Might it help to repeat any activities from this session?

One way to build community is to engage others in a highly organized scheme. How can you be like Hare, who inspired many friends to jump in and build a house together? Look over the next session you will lead for any preparation that you need to do in advance.

TAKING IT HOME

The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen. Together, our vision widens and strength is renewed. – Mark Morrison-Reed

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Our focus this week has been on community, and the gifts that each of us bring when we come together as a community. The children heard the story of Hare's Gifts, an African fable of the origin of village communities, and they made log drums to make music for dancing, as Hare did. We also passed out copies of the church directory. We looked one over and found our families in there. You and your child might enjoy going through it to look for friends. If your family is not in the directory or your contact information is old, consider contacting our congregation's office to remedy this.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Our group talked about church as community, but there can be many other communities in our lives. What communities do individuals in your family belong to (such as school or sports teams)? What communities do your family as a whole belong to (such as your neighborhood or a family camp that you return to each year)? Do you feel that, like Hare, you live surrounded by friends, or, like Hyena, are you isolated from others, even if people live right next to you? Are there ways that you could increase your sense of connection, and of sharing your gifts with your communities?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Ritual

One of the important facets of community is feeling that one's gifts are welcome and valued by the other

members of the community. You can create a family ritual to honor the gifts that each person brings to your family. Around the dinner table, or in a circle at bedtime, go around the circle and have each person say to the family member on their right "Today, you have given me the gift of..." The gift could be anything from listening to a person's story or laughing at their joke to wider concepts such as love or respect.

A Family Game

The children played animal charades during their class this week. Animal charades can be a fun game to play at home as well (and is good for passing the time waiting in line at the store or waiting for dinner to be served in a restaurant). To play animal charades, one person silently acts out an animal, while the other people try to guess the animal being portrayed.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

The story featured in this week's lesson is a trickster tale from Africa, with Hare and Hyena as the main characters. Africans brought these stories with them to North America. Then Hare became Brer Rabbit and Fox became Brer Fox. Uncle Remus tales are full of stories about these two. You can find out more about [Hare and Hyena](#) online. Or, see one of these books:

Nelson Mandela's Favorite African Folktales, by Nelson Mandela (New York: Norton, 2002)

The Tales of Uncle Remus: The Adventures of Brer Rabbit (Puffin, 1999) and *Further Tales of Uncle Remus* (Dial, 1990), both by Julius Lester and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney.

Also, here are a couple of books about drums. The first is for adults; the second is a children's book:

Sacred Drumming, by Steven Ash (Sterling, 2004)

To Be a Drum, written by Evelyn Coleman and illustrated by Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson (Morton Grove, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Company, 1998)

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FREEZE DANCE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Drums the children made in Activity 4: Making a Log Drum, or music to play and pause on a CD or tape player

Preparation for Activity

- Make sure you have enough room for children to spread out and "freeze dance" safely.
- Decide in advance how you will allow children to be the music makers. Can they use the CD player? How many children do you want to play their drums at one time? How will you decide whose turn it is?

Description of Activity

A group game helps children build community. This game is similar to musical chairs. Say, in your own words:

The guests at Hare's party not only got to make music, they also danced. Dancing is another activity that sometimes we do alone, but sometimes people like to do it together: at celebrations, like weddings or in staged performances.

Ask children for examples of when they have danced in a group with other people. If dancing together occurs in your congregation, give specific examples.

Now say:

Here is a game called Freeze Dance where we can dance together. Everyone find a space on the floor to stand where you have enough room to dance without bumping into other children.

Once all children have found a spot to stand, tell them that when the music plays, they should dance. When the music stops, everyone freezes.

Say, in your own words:

The music may end when you are in an awkward position. If any part of your body moves after the music stops, you become a music maker. The music makers will take turns playing the music for freeze dance and deciding when to start and stop.

You can make music in a couple of different ways. You could play recorded music on a CD or tape player and hit "Pause" or "Stop" when it's time for dancers to freeze. Or, you could play a beat on a drum constructed in Activity 4: Making a Log Drum. If you plan to use the drums you made, don't use paint to decorate as the paint will not be dry in time.

STORY: HARE'S GIFTS

Adapted from a West African folktale.

Note: The one-reader version uses masculine pronouns for Hyena and Hare and female pronouns for Butterfly. In the multiple-reader versions, all the characters are gender neutral.

This introduction can serve all three versions of the story:

In some countries in Africa, people like to tell stories about a tricky hare, which is like a rabbit, and a hyena. This story is about Hare and Hyena, but it's about other animals that live in the grasslands of Africa, too. It takes place during a time when the animals all lived far away from each other. The name of this fable is "Hare's Gifts." A fable is a story that has a message it wants you to remember. Many times, fables have animal characters that think, talk, and act like humans.

Hare's Gifts – for one reader

A long time ago, before there were people on earth, there were many different animals that lived all over. Some of the animals lived in the grasslands, but they did not live too close to each other because they thought it was best that way. One such animal was Hyena. He decided that he needed a new home and so he found the perfect place. It was far away from all the other animals, near sweet water and protected by the shade of the baobab tree.

Hyena wanted the best home possible, so everyone who would see it would know how important he was in the grasslands. So he had the best builder in the land build it and decorate it for him. It took a whole moon's time to build and when it was done Hyena threw a party to show it off. He hired the best chef in the land to cook the food and there was so much, that it took a week to cook it all.

Hyena invited everyone to his party and everyone came and greatly admired his fine new home and the delicious feast. Everyone, that is, except Hare. This made Hyena mad. The next morning, he decided to pay a visit to Hare. "Why did you not come to my party last night to see my fine, new home?" asked Hyena.

"Your fine, new home? I hear that it is nothing special – just another hole in the wall. And I'm sure your party was quite dull."

"You are just jealous because you do not have such a grand home," said Hyena.

"I could have one if I wanted one", replied Hare.

"Oh, you think so! Let's see then. I challenge you to build a home better than mine in half the time. In two weeks time, I will return to see your home and I expect to go to the best party even given. If you can't provide

these things you bragged about, I think I'll be wearing a hare coat come winter!" And off he stormed.

Boy, I've really put my foot in my mouth this time, thought Hare. Then, because he was always a tricky fellow, he came up with an idea. He visited all his animal neighbors and asked them to help him build a new, fine home. If they did, he promised them two great gifts when they were done. All the animals wanted to see what the great gifts were, but some animals did not want to leave their families. So Hare told them to bring their families, too.

So all the animals built huts for their families and then went to work building a big home for Hare. Because so many animals worked on the home, it was easily built within two weeks. Which was a good thing because Hare was too lazy to help build his home. He picked up a log and a stick and spent his time lying around tapping out beats on the log.

When Hyena returned, he found a home that looked a lot like his own. He asked Hare what made his home better.

"Don't you have eyes to see?" asked Hare. "I don't just have a home. I have a village. Now all my animal friends live close by and it's easier for us to visit and have fun together. This was Hare's first gift: the village or community. Hyena had to admit that it was very nice to have a community of friends nearby.

Then Hare invited everyone to the party. Because there were so many in the village, no one person had to cook the whole feast. Everyone brought the dish they made best. The food was truly as delicious as what Hyena served, but Hyena wanted to know what made it better. Hare said, "Just wait." And began to tap out upon the log the rhythm he had been working on while others built his home. The beat was very catchy and pretty soon, others started tapping it out. Then butterfly flew up and started moving her wings to the beat and before you know it, everyone was making music and dancing.

Hare said, "This is my second gift: the drum." Hyena had to admit that Hare's party was better because of the drum. With all the eating, music and dancing, though, Hyena wasn't too disappointed.

Some people say Hare really presented the animals with three gifts: the village, the drum and music. Some say music and the drum were the same gift. Hare doesn't give an opinion one way or another, but I bet he enjoys the argument.

Hare's Gifts – for two readers

HYENA: Hello, I am Hyena! I am the best animal in the grasslands. Oh, I know some animals don't think I am the best. Especially that trickster, Hare. So, I'm going to prove it. I have had the best builder in the land build a big, lovely new home just for me. I found a good site to build my new home. It is beside sweet water and in

shade of the baobab tree. No one else knows about this place and my house is the only one there. I want everyone to see how wonderful I am, too. I have invited all you animals (gestures to children) to a feast in my new home.

Welcome, friends! Eat, drink and admire my new home. Surely this is the most magnificent house ever built. (Pause.) I see everyone here but Hare. Where is Hare? He/she is always irritating me. Tomorrow, I'm going to pay Hare a visit.

HARE: Good morning, Hyena.

HYENA: Good morning, indeed! Too bad you missed a good night. I am very angry with you! Why didn't you come see my fine, new home last night? Why did you not join my feast? Everyone else was there.

HARE: Fine, new home? That old thing? I could build a better house in half the time. As for your feast, I could throw such a good party, that everyone will forget you even had a party!

HYENA: (smiling smugly) All right, Hare. I challenge you. It took a full moon to build and decorate my new home. You have a half moon. Then, I will come back and expect a great feast. Your feast and your house better be better than mine or my winter robe will be made of hare skin! Goodbye!

HARE: (scratching head) Hey, I've really done it this time. When am I going to learn to keep my big mouth shut? (Pauses to think) Hey! I've got an idea! But I need all the other animals to help me put it in place.

HARE: (ask one of the children) Hello, Mr. Crocodile. I need help building a new home. If you help me, I promise you two great gifts better than any gifts you've ever had before. Will you help? (Ask all the children, using different animal names. It's fine if some children say no.) It may take a while to make my new home. I want all the animals that are going to help me to be comfortable, so why don't you all set up huts to live in, right here by the construction site. Bring your whole families!

Okay, go to work (you can let the children pretend to build)!

(aside) While all the other animals work, I'm going to fool around with this wooden block and stick because I don't like to break a sweat. (Play around with a rhythm on the block with a stick for several seconds. Then say, to the children/animals) Wow! Great job. I love the house you built and you finished right on time. Here comes Hyena!

HYENA: Well, well, Hare. Your half moon is up. I see your new home. It is very nice indeed. In fact, it looks just like mine. What makes your home better?

HARE: Just look around you and see! My hut is better because now everyone lives near it and we can be neighbors and I can have my fun with them all the time!

HYENA: Well, you may be right about that. I guess it is sweet to live together: sharing, helping and having fun together.

HARE: That is my first gift to all the animals: a village.

HYENA: Hmmmmph! Well... you also promised a feast better than mine, remember?

HARE: Of course, I remember. (Claps hands) Bring the food for the feast! Since the work was divided amongst so many cooks, everyone had time to prepare the dishes they make best.

HYENA: I must admit: the food could not be better. However, the food at my feast was wonderful, too. What makes yours better?

HARE: My feast includes more than just food. Get ready for my second gift. Be quiet and listen. (Tap out a simple rhythm with the block and stick.)

HYENA: That is catchy! What do you call that?

HARE: I call it music. It's nice to listen to and you can move or dance to it, too. These are my gifts, Hyena. The village and music. (Ask the children) Animals, do you like my gifts?

HYENA: Drat! Tricked by that trickster Hare again!

Hare's Gifts – for five readers and one non-reading performer (Butterfly)

Characters:

Narrator, Hyena, Hare, Crocodile, Ostrich, and Butterfly

NARRATOR: This is a story about life back in the old days. It's mostly about Hare and Hyena, but it's also about the other animals of the grasslands. Back in those days, animals just settled down and built a hut any ol' place. It made it hard sometimes to go and visit your friends. But no one put much thought into where they built their houses. Until Hyena had an idea.

HYENA: I know some of these guys really look down on me. I bet they wouldn't be that way if I had a grand, fine home. I'm going to build one! It will be the finest hut anywhere in the grasslands!

NARRATOR: And that's just what Hyena did. Hyena found a good site beside sweet water and in the shade of the baobab tree and started building. When it was finished, Hyena threw a party to show it off and invited all the animals, even that trickster Hare.

Crocodile, Ostrich, and Butterfly met on their way to Hyena's party.

CROCODILE: Are you on your way to Hyena's party?

OSTRICH: I can't wait to see it! I hear that it has enormously tall, white walls covered in gaily painted designs: spirals and circles and zigzags!

CROCODILE: I hear that after we tour the home, Hyena is having a great feast. All the guests are invited to eat all they want!

HYENA: Welcome, friends! Eat, drink and admire my new home. Surely this is the most magnificent hut ever to be built! (pause) I see everyone here but Hare. Has anyone seen Hare?

NARRATOR: Not one animal had seen Hare, who didn't come to Hyena's party at all. The next morning, a very insulted Hyena paid a visit to Hare's hut.

HARE: Good morning, Hyena.

HYENA: Good morning indeed, Hare. Too bad you missed a good night! Where were you last night? Why did you not come see my fine new hut? Why did you not join the feast?

HARE: That old thing? I could build a better one in half the time. As for your feast, why should I come and be bored? I could give a feast that would make every animal in the land forget all about yours.

HYENA (SMILING SMUGLY): All right, Hare. It took me a full moon to build and decorate my hut. You have half a moon. And your feast had better be a good one or my winter robe will be made of hare skin. Goodbye!

HARE (SCRATCHING HIS HEAD): You've really done it this time, Hare! When will you learn to keep your big mouth shut? (thinking pause) Hey, I've got an idea. I hope I can get the animals to help me put it in place.

NARRATOR: Hare jumped up and started running to all the other huts scattered across the land to ask all the animals to come and help. To get them to come, Hare promised to reward all the animals with two marvelous, unheard-of gifts and a wonderful feast when all the work was done. The animals were just as excited about Hare's party as they had been about Hyena's

CROCODILE: Hello, Hare. Here we are. What should we do first?

HARE: Hello, Crocodile. Yours is the last family to arrive. Now we go to work.

NARRATOR: And work they did. Hare got the best woodworkers to set the poles to make the new hut, and then to set the poles to make new huts for all the other huts for all the other animals that had come. Hare got the best painters to paint the walls, the best artists to

decorate them; and all the others to prepare food for a feast. After giving every single guest a job to do, Hare went for a walk, found a hollow log and a couple of sticks, and spent the entire half moon fiddling around with them.

HYENA: Well, well, Hare. Your half moon is up. I see your new hut. It is very nice indeed. As nice as mine. In fact, it looks exactly like mine. Can you prove that yours is better?

HARE: Are you blind as well as stupid. Just look around you and you'll see. My hut is better than yours because it was built by all the animals. And, now they all live near my hut, where I can have my fun with them.

OSTRICH: You know, Hare is right! It's sweet to live together: sharing and helping each other.

CROCODILE: And knowing each other.

HARE: That is my first gift: a village.

HYENA: A village? HMMMMMPH! Well.... You also promised a feast better than mine, remember?

HARE: Of course, I remember. (claps hands) Bring the food for the feast.

NARRATOR: The dishes for the feast were laid out for all to share. Since the work was divided amongst so many cooks, every animal had a chance to prepare their own, very best dish. So the food was as good as it gets. That left all the guests happy, which, of course, made the storytellers relax and tell better stories.

HARE: Now you are ready for my second gift. Be quiet and listen.

NARRATOR: With that, Hare began to tap out a simple beat on the hollow log with the sticks. As Hare warmed up, the rhythms became more complex. Soon the animals begin to twitch and sway and move. Suddenly, Butterfly jumped up, flapping beautiful wings in time to the drum beats. Butterfly began to move in a circle around the fire. Before long, all the guests, even Hyena, joined the dance to the beat of the drum, Hare's second gift.

Now some people say Hare really presented three gifts: the village, the drum, and the music; while some say the drum and music are really one. You know what I think? I think it hardly matters, but I'm sure that Hare enjoys the argument.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: MEMBER DIRECTORY DISTRIBUTION NOTICE TO PARENTS

Dear Families:

On [day, date, time] the Creating Home program will be talking about being part of a community. As part of this session, the children and leaders will hand out congregational directories to members who need them. By doing this Faith in Action project, the children will encourage and help members of the congregation to stay connected.

In order to reach as many members as possible we plan to distribute the directories [insert when, where, for how long, e.g., immediately at the end of worship, outside the sanctuary, for about 10 minutes].

We hope you will let your child stay for this extra time to participate in this activity with the group. We will return to our usual meeting space afterward and you may pick up children there.

Thank you,

[Leaders' names]

FIND OUT MORE

When Africans were brought to this country, their stories came with them. Hare became Brer Rabbit and Hyena morphed into Brer Fox. Their escapades are still being shared today. Knowing the roots of legends and folktales in our culture can increase our appreciation for the cultural diversity in our land.

Find out more about [Hare and Hyena](http://www.sacred-texts.com/afr/mlb/mlb19.htm) (at www.sacred-texts.com/afr/mlb/mlb19.htm)online.

Or, see one of these books:

Nelson Mandela's Favorite African Folktales, by Nelson Mandela (New York: Norton, 2002)

The Tales of Uncle Remus: The Adventures of Brer Rabbit (Puffin, 1999) and *Further Tales of Uncle Remus* (Dial, 1990), both by Julius Lester and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney

Also, here are a couple of books about drums. The first is for adults; the second is a children's book:

Sacred Drumming, by Steven Ash (Sterling, 2004)

To Be a Drum, written by Evelyn Coleman and illustrated by Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson (Morton Grove, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Company, 1998), is a beautiful book about Africa, African Americans, and drums.

Many websites offer information on drums in a variety of cultures, so you needn't limit your exploration to African drums. Part of the beauty and great significance of the drum is that it is indigenous to almost every culture that has ever existed. You might research percussion instruments native to the land of your ancestors and present this information to children, who will surely appreciate the personal connection you make with this topic.

SESSION 9: OUR ANCESTRAL HOME

INTRODUCTION

One generation plants the trees; another gets the shade. — Chinese proverb

In addition to the particular places where we live and our immediate families, many of us also call home the places from which our ancestors came. Memories and stories associated with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and great-grandparents can make us feel as if the places they lived are also, in a way, our homes. Being able to trace our ancestry to a particular place can make us feel anchored and secure. It can help us feel connected to something larger and greater than ourselves.

Telling stories about our ancestors, those who preceded us, is a way to keep their memory alive. It is a way to acknowledge and be thankful for the love and legacies they left behind.

A Chinese quote opens this session because beliefs and practices related to honoring one's ancestors play a strong role in Chinese culture. In fact, forms of ancestor worship have been part of many religions and cultures for thousands of years. People who feel and express connections to their ancestors are creating a beloved community that extends beyond the lifetimes of the current generation.

Where ancestor worship is practiced, many people believe that the spirits of their ancestors influence their daily lives. They may feel a moral or religious obligation to live their lives according to values and beliefs they have inherited from their ancestors. Belief in a real ancestral presence in our lives may seem strange to us. However, we, too, often desire to connect to those who went before us. We look for facial resemblances in newborns and treasure old family photographs. Most of all, we enjoy telling stories about these ancestors and how their lives differed from or mirror our own.

As our family homes reflect our family ancestors, our Unitarian Universalist faith homes reflect those who came before us and helped to shape our denomination and our particular congregation. Many Unitarian Universalist find strength, wisdom, and affirmation of our Unitarian Universalist identity in the words and actions of Unitarian Universalist predecessors. Acknowledging these predecessors is an important way to keep our Unitarian Universalist heritage alive.

Though we may not believe the spirits of our Unitarian Universalist ancestors influence our daily lives, exploring our kinship with our ancestors in faith can help us create a beloved community that extends both backward and

forward in time. As we attend to the past, we realize we will be the ancestors of tomorrow's Unitarian Universalists. What sort of legacy will we leave for them?

GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce ancestors as those who came before us in our families, our families' ethnic and cultural heritages, our faith home, and our faith denomination
- Explore how ancestors can leave a legacy, and how we can receive it
- Introduce some Unitarian Universalist faith ancestors and their legacies

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Gain an explanation of the words "ancestor" and "legacy"
- Through a story, understand how ancestors can leave a legacy to those they love
- Learn about famous Unitarian Universalists
- Create a special place to honor our faith ancestors
- Learn and try a body prayer
- Optional: Discover who founded or shaped their faith home
- Optional: Hear of a Unitarian Universalist ancestor with whom the leader feels a personal connection

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Black Crayon Legacies	10
Activity 2: Story — The Farmer's Legacy	8
Activity 3: Meet Your Unitarian Universalist Ancestors	12
Activity 4: Honoring Unitarian Universalist Ancestors	10
Activity 5: Body Prayer	10
Faith In Action: Founders Plaque Rubbing — Short-term	30

Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Your Favorite Unitarian Universalist Ancestor	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Talking about ancestors can be complicated and potentially painful for some children. Some may have been adopted into their families. In essence, they belong to two family lines, and may lack information about their birth ancestors. Some may belong to an African American family line that was fractured during the era of U.S. slavery. Children whose families came to the U.S. as immigrants or refugees may be unable to trace their family ancestry very far.

How far back does your family ancestry go? How might you feel differently about this topic if your ability to trace your ancestry were different? Look over all of the activities for this session through the lens of someone with few or no biological ancestors.

Lacking information about a long family history is not necessarily bad: Unencumbered by ancestors, one gains the freedom to choose one's own roots. Think about advantages to both situations. See if you can get comfortable with a notion of ancestry that transcends biological ties. Spend a few minutes before the session sharing your reflections with your co-leader.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- On top of the labyrinth, place the basket of stones.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. The labyrinth should be spread upon the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand. Be aware of newcomers or guests in the room. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to say with you:

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

Invite children to place their stones on the labyrinth, one at a time. Tell them they may share any joys or concerns they would like to when it is their turn to place their stone. You may say:

When Unitarian Universalists come together, we often take time to tell one another about the joys and concerns going on in our lives. Joys are the things that make you feel happy. Concerns are worries. This is your time to share a joy or concern, if you would like to do so.

Close the joys and concerns by affirming that it is very good to be together. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: BLACK CRAYON LEGACIES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Plain 8 1/2 x 11" paper
- Crayons, black and a variety of different colors
- Plastic knives, coins, pencils, or other objects for participants to rub a layer of crayon off paper
- Optional: Store-bought multicolored scratch-art paper for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- To make your own scratch-art paper, take a sheet of paper and cover it entirely by pressing down to color hard with a variety of colored crayons (but not black). Make a pattern of colors, if you choose. Then completely cover the sheet in black crayon so no other color shows. If you cut each sheet in half, you will have twice as many scratch-art sheets. Make sure you have enough for all participants.
- Optional: Purchase multicolor scratch-art paper from a craft store or toy store.
- Gather implements for children to rub the top, black layer of crayon off the paper.

Description of Activity

This activity helps children discover hands-on the meaning of the word "legacy" as something that others have left behind for you.

Ask if anyone knows what the word "legacy" means. Confirm any definitions children suggest that are correct, or close. Tell the group you will show them what a legacy is like.

Provide each child with a sheet of scratch-art paper and an implement sharp enough to rub off the top, black crayon layer (but not too sharp).

Invite the children to use their implement as if it were a pencil for drawing, and rub off the black layer of crayon. Suggest they think about a design they would like to make, such as stripes, circles, a flower, or a sun. As they rub off the top layer of crayon, they will reveal the bright colors underneath.

As children work on their pictures, explain that legacies are things left behind by people who came before us. Sometimes discovering a legacy can be a pleasant surprise — like scratching off the top color of our paper and finding many other colors underneath. Our ancestors — family members who lived before us — can leave us different kinds of legacies.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE FARMER'S LEGACY (8 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of story, "[The Farmer's Legacy](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: "[The Farmer's Legacy](#)" coloring sheet, and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review, download, and print out the story, "The Farmer's Legacy"
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle so they may sit comfortably and hear you tell the story. You may say, in your own words:

Here is a story about one family's legacy. After I tell you this story, I am going to ask you what kind of legacy the farmer left for his children. So, listen carefully to figure out what the legacy might be.

Read aloud or tell the story, "The Farmer's Legacy." When you have finished, ask the group what the legacy was. Help the children understand that the legacy was more than the fields. By leaving the fields for his children to farm, the old farmer made sure they would have good food and a reason and a place to stay together as a family.

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "The Farmer's Legacy" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 3: MEET YOUR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ANCESTORS (12 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Three empty boxes with covers
- Items to fill the boxes, cut out from [Unitarian Universalist Ancestor Boxes](#) (included in this document)

- Optional: Additional items for each box

Preparation for Activity

- Fill three empty boxes, such as shoeboxes, with items to represent the legacies of Charles Dickens, Hajom Kissor Singh, and Susan B. Anthony. Unitarian Universalist Ancestor Boxes provide pictures of all three, along with images of related items that reflect their legacies. Cover the boxes.
- Optional: Enhance the contents of each box with additional items, as suggested in Unitarian Universalist Ancestor Boxes.
- Optional: If you wish, make additional ancestor boxes to recall other Unitarian Universalists from the past. Include items that will help you explain their legacies to the group.

Description of Activity

Children will learn about some famous Unitarian Universalists and come to understand these individuals as their own faith ancestors.

Say, in your own words:

People don't have to be related to each other or live with each other to give or receive a legacy. People leave legacies to those who come after them because they love them. We know that you don't have to be related to love someone or consider them family.

Sometimes people don't even realize they are leaving a legacy. Maybe someone from long ago just tried to live a good life and help other people. When we learn about someone like that, we might feel inspired by their life. Their legacy is that we want to try to live our lives the same way. Do you know any people who tried to live a good life and thereby set an example for us?

Let the children give answers. If needed, prompt with people such as Jesus, Martin Luther King, Jr.; Mahatma Gandhi; Mother Theresa; Moses; Muhammad; Rosa Parks, or Harriet Tubman.

Tell the group:

When someone has led a life that inspires people, we frequently honor their memory. We might have a holiday just for thinking about that person and their legacy, like we do for Martin Luther King. Your parents or teachers might sometimes repeat that person's words. You might see a poster with that person's picture and some of their words, or even a movie about them.

Unitarian Universalists are very fond of talking about famous Unitarians and Universalists from a long time ago. These are our Unitarian Universalist faith ancestors. They may not be related to us like someone in our family. But, we are connected to them by our common faith. They are our ancestors because they lived before us. The good things they did during their lives are a legacy that we get to share.

Show the children the three legacy boxes you have made. Say, in your own words:

Here on the table are three legacy boxes. Inside each one you will find some things to remind us of a legacy from one of our Unitarian Universalist ancestors.

Invite each child to go to each box, lift one edge of its cover, and peek inside. Ask the children not to totally uncover the box, so everyone else has a chance to peek inside. After every child has had a turn, open one box at a time. Show everyone its contents and ask the children to describe what they see.

The boxes are:

- Box #1: An image of Charles Dickens, a copy of A Christmas Carol and the movie Oliver!
- Box #2: An image of Hajom Kissor Singh, a map of India, a picture of a church-like building
- Box #3: An image of Susan B. Anthony, a Susan B. Anthony dollar, a facsimile of a voting ballot

Tell the group, in these words or your own, about each of these Unitarian Universalist ancestors and their legacies:

Charles Dickens was a writer whose legacy included great stories, many of which have been made into plays and movies. People learned from his stories about how hard life can be for children who are poor. His stories inspired many people to take action to help others.

Hajom Kissor Singh came to his Unitarian faith on his own, before he learned that others shared his beliefs. He founded Unitarian congregations in India. He helped spread our faith in a country that now has more than 30,000 Unitarian Universalists.

Susan B. Anthony worked very hard to tell people why men and women should be allowed to do the same things. In her lifetime, women were not allowed to vote, and she believed this was not fair. Because of her work, our country changed its law so both men and women could vote.

What great legacies these Unitarians left behind. Because we are Unitarian Universalists, these people are our faith ancestors. We honor them by remembering them, telling their stories, and trying to live lives that help other people, as they did. We try to put our Unitarian Universalist values into practice.

ACTIVITY 4: HONORING OUR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ANCESTORS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: Tablecloth and chalice
- Optional: Push pins or tape

Preparation for Activity

- Designate a space to honor one or more of our faith ancestors. It could be a shelf, wall space, or a small table. If you have a table, you may like to cover it with a tablecloth and place a chalice on it. If you will use a wall space, you might identify the space, such as by posting blank, colored construction paper, before you start this activity; also, obtain push pins or tape.
- Optional: If you plan to use music, identify the music you would like to play and bring it to the session. Some music is suggested in the Leader Resources section.

Description of Activity

With the children, create a special place to honor our Unitarian Universalist faith ancestors.

Ask the children how many have a wall or another place in their home where family photographs are displayed. Ask if any of the photographs are old or contain images of people who have died.

Say in your own words: "Many houses have a place where families display photographs or objects that belonged to their ancestors. Sometimes, you will see a family member stop in front of this place and look at the photographs or objects. What do you think they might be thinking?"

Children may offer that a parent is remembering his/her own parents or other relatives, or that someone might be wondering about the identity of someone represented in a photograph. After some responses, invite the children to create a special place to honor our Unitarian Universalist faith ancestors.

Go to the place in your meeting space that you have chosen to be the "special place" for honoring ancestors. If you have a small table or shelf, place the objects from the three Unitarian Universalist Ancestor Boxes on the

table. If you are using a wall space, invite some children to help you post items from the ancestor boxes. You may add other decorative or special objects to this place.

You might explain that an altar is a place to offer religious or spiritual gifts. Let them know that you have chosen to use this special place as an altar to honor not just Anthony, Singh, and Dickens, but all our Unitarian Universalist faith ancestors, much like the way the name stones on the labyrinth symbolize the Creating Home community.

Invite children to pick up their name stone from the labyrinth and place them gently on the special space you have created. Placing their stones symbolizes their connection to our Unitarian Universalist faith ancestors. Light the chalice. Your altar/centering table is now created.

As a variation, if you wish to make this activity more ritualized, after you show the children the table or shelf, or wall space, explain what they will do next. Put on gentle music to play in the background. (See the Leader Resources section for a suggestion of music.) As the music plays, gently place the items from the Unitarian Universalist Ancestor Boxes on the altar. Light the chalice. Then, let each child go, one at a time, to get their stone and add it to the altar. If you use the music, slowly decrease the volume after the last child has placed a stone before going on to the next activity. Be sure to blow out the chalice when you are done.

ACTIVITY 5: BODY PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Optional: A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: CD with a version of the song, "Spirit of Life"

Preparation for Activity

- Review "Spirit of Life," Hymn #123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. If you plan to sing or teach the song, make sure you know the tune. The Unitarian Universalist Association's [online bookstore](#) offers several CDs with versions of "Spirit of Life."
- With your co-leader, create a series of simple body movements to accompany the song, "Spirit of Life." For example, "Spirit of Life, come unto me" could be arms outstretched and then crossed on the chest.
- Optional: If you will have time, plan to create the body movements with the group.

- Optional: If the group has not learned the song, "Spirit of Life," arrange to play a recording of the song while you teach the body movements to (or create body movements with) the group.

Description of Activity

Step away from the altar to introduce the idea of a body prayer. Tell the children that when people approach an altar, they often pray or meditate. Ask the group whether they have ever seen or heard anyone pray or meditate. Allow a few descriptions, if children offer some.

Affirm that there are many different ways to pray or meditate. You may say:

Some people might sing when they pray; other people might say some words quietly to themselves. Some people might sit very still and not say anything at all. All kinds of praying and meditation are ways for people to feel connected with something besides themselves. When people come to an altar or other special place to pray or meditate, they feel connected to whatever the altar is about.

If the group has learned the song, "Spirit of Life," Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, remind them of the lines that refer to "roots" and "wings." We can find our "roots" in the connection we feel to our ancestors and use our "wings" to take us into the future as the next generation of Unitarian Universalists. Invite the group to sing it with you.

Explain that we are going to meditate by moving our bodies. This can also be called a body prayer. Arrange the children in a circle around the altar/centering table where all can see you and all have room to move without bumping into one another.

Sing the song, lead the group in singing the song, or play a recording of the song while you teach or create the body movements. Teach the group the movements you and your co-leader have chosen to accompany the song, or, you may choose instead to lead the group to invent their own movements.

After performing the movements with the words, practice them without the words, in silence. This is now your body prayer.

Lead the children in doing the body prayer a few times. Then, extinguish the chalice and invite the children to take their stones back to the labyrinth.

Suggest that when children are feeling a little down or bored or tired, they might repeat the body prayer they learned. Maybe it will help them remember how important they are to their faith home and the people they see here when they come. It might make them feel better. They could do a body prayer in the morning

when they wake up to greet the day. Or, they could do it at night in appreciation for the experiences that day has brought. Invite the children to teach it to their families, if they enjoyed it.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the words "ancestor" and "legacy" with bold marker on index cards or post-its.

Description of Activity

- Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice.

Tell the group that it is now time to share a closing ritual.

Invite the children to take their stones from the labyrinth and return them to the basket. Then, ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The words for our Word Wall today are "ancestor" and "legacy."

Show the group the index cards or post-its on which you have written "ancestor" and "legacy." Post them on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite participants to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,

When our heart is in a holy place.

We are blessed with love and amazing grace.

When our heart is in a holy place.

Say in your own words:

Now we leave our classroom and go out into the world. May the memory of our faith ancestors help us be the kind of Unitarian Universalists in the world that we wish to be. See you next time!

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind participants to give the handout to their parents.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: FOUNDERS PLAQUE RUBBING — SHORT-TERM (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint
- Masking tape
- Soft, thick sticks of chalk or pastels, in a variety of colors

Preparation for Activity

- Locate on your congregational grounds a plaque that displays the names of congregation's founders, former ministers, lay leaders, or other past members who were recognized for a contribution to the life of the congregation.
- Optional: If the plaque you intend to take rubbings of is too high for children to reach, plan to bring a stable chair that a child can safely stand upon.

Description of Activity

Children will discover something about the congregation's founders or other important people in the history of their faith home.

If your congregation has a plaque with the names of the original founding members, take the group on a walk to view it. Or, find another plaque that displays the names of people who played a role in the congregation's history. Read the names aloud and discuss with the group any other information you find on the plaque, such as date the congregation was founded.

Explain that sometimes people take rubbings of tombstones. You may not have tombstones here at your faith home of the ancestors who started your

congregation, but you have the plaque. You can take rubbings of that.

Help children, one at a time, place their sheets of paper across the plaque. Tape each sheet down. Help children rub across the plaque with the chalk or pastels, varying the colors you give each child.

After each child has completed a rubbing, return to your meeting space. Ask children to begin cutting out their rubbings. Help children as needed. Assemble the rubbings into a group collage for a bulletin board or wall.

If you can obtain photocopies of photographs of the founding members or other past congregants whose names you have captured in the rubbings, include these in the collage. You can also include pictures or photographs of the building and other relevant decorations. Write a label for the collage, such as "The Founding of our Faith Home," and hang the collage in your meeting space or elsewhere in the congregational facilities.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

This session has the potential to cover quite a bit of Unitarian Universalist history. Some children will be interested, some not. Do you feel you did a good job of tracking the group's interest level and adjusting as needed?

How did the children react to the rituals around the altar? If they liked the altar and you are able to keep it intact in your meeting space, you may find ways to use it again in later sessions.

TAKING IT HOME

One generation plants the trees; another gets the shade. – Chinese proverb

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The group talked about ancestors – both family and faith ancestors – and the legacies they leave for future generations. The children heard a story, "The Farmer's Legacy," in which a farmer coaxes his adult children to continue farming the land he plans to leave them, by telling them as he dies that a treasure is buried in the land. You can find the story on the [Tapestry of Faith website](#). Select this curriculum, *Creating Home* (Living Faith, Kindergarten/First Grade). Click on Session 9: Our Ancestral Home. Go to the Session 9 Resources section; look under "Stories."

As part of our discussion of ancestors we talked about the legacies of UU faith ancestors Hajom Kissor Singh, Susan B. Anthony, and Charles Dickens. Learning more about their faith ancestors may be very useful to children, particularly if you live in an area where few

people are familiar with Unitarian Universalism. It will help them see how deep our roots go.

We also created an altar and performed a body prayer to help connect us to our Unitarian Universalist faith ancestors. The body prayer is to the song, "Spirit of Life," Hymn 123 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. See if your child can sing it with you.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Not all legacies are treasures worth a lot of money. Family traditions that your child knows quite well may contain legacies from your family ancestors. Talk together about the traditions you share as a family. How do you mark birthdays, national holidays, cultural holidays, or religious holidays? Are there traditions peculiar to your family, such as planting window boxes together each spring, or attending an annual reunion of extended cousins? Which of your traditions reflect a legacy from previous generations? Which break with, or modify, your ancestors' ways? If your children are adopted, this is an excellent opportunity to talk about their birth ancestors and cultural legacies from the country(ies) of their birth family.

You may want to share with your child the importance of certain family traditions to you. Find out which are important to your child.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Ritual

In today's session, children created an altar to acknowledge our shared Unitarian Universalist faith ancestors. Does your family home have an altar that honors and remembers your family ancestors? Perhaps you display photographs or other items that recall your forebears. Consider what it might feel like to gather these items as an altar.

A Family Game

UU of the Month. Your family might like to choose a different Unitarian Universalist to talk about every month. At a shared meal, have an adult or an older youth present a fact about a Unitarian Universalist ancestor. Then, invite everyone to chime in with their observations about how this ancestor's life has affected their own. Is the UU of the Month a scientist? Maybe your child loves science, too. History becomes more real and much more fun when a personal connection is made.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Some well known Unitarian Universalists were born into and raised in Unitarian, Universalist, or (more recently) Unitarian Universalist congregations. Many others came to our faith later in life. Peruse the [Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography](#) to learn more

about Béla Bartók, e. e. cummings, Julia Ward Howe, Linus Pauling, William Howard Taft, and many others.

The [KidTalk page](#) from the (UU) [Church of the Larger Fellowship](#) also features a person from Unitarian and/or Universalist history each month. You can look back through the archives to find a variety of Unitarian Universalist heroes.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: YOUR FAVORITE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ANCESTOR (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- An empty box with a cover
- Items to fill the box

Preparation for Activity

- Using Activity 3: Meet Your Unitarian Universalist Ancestors as a guide, fill the box with items to represent the legacy of a Unitarian Universalist whose life and accomplishments interest you.
- If you have not done Activity 3: Meet Your Unitarian Universalist Ancestors, find ideas and inspiration for creating a legacy box in the activity description and on Leader Resource 1, Unitarian Universalist Ancestor Boxes.

Description of Activity

Here is an opportunity to share something significant to you with the group. Introduce the children to a Unitarian Universalist faith ancestor with whom you feel a personal connection. Use the box activity described in Activity 3: Meet Your Unitarian Universalist Ancestors to share information about another Unitarian Universalist life and legacy.

Gather the group and provide a brief description of the person you wish to introduce. Pass around the legacy box you have made. Invite children to ask questions about the person, and answer those that you can.

Of course, you may use another activity. For instance, if you own a piece of Wedgwood, you might prepare a five-minute talk about Josiah Wedgwood and show the group your Wedgwood piece and pictures from the internet or books. You might ask a potter from the congregation to give a pottery demonstration.

If the group has done Activity 4: Honoring Our Unitarian Universalist Ancestors, add to the altar an item that represents this additional ancestor.

STORY: THE FARMER'S LEGACY

Once there was a farmer. He was very old and ill and knew he would soon die. He had lived a good life and his only regret was that his three children fought all the time. None of them seemed interested in taking care of the large farm the old man had established. They were rather lazy. The farm was big enough for several farmhouses and produced enough food to easily provide for any families his children might someday start. The only reason the old farmer had worked so hard his entire life was to leave a legacy to his children so their life would be easier. Now that his life was near its end, he wanted to find some way to help them see what a precious thing it is to be able to work your own land and provide for your family. So he did.

One winter day, the old farmer called his children to his sick bed. "My children, I have accumulated great wealth."

"Where is this great wealth?", they asked.

"You have never seen it. It exists out, deep in the fields. That is where you will find your legacy." A short time later, the farmer died.

His children grieved, because they loved their father. Their sadness brought them together and they stopped fighting. One day, they decided to go looking for their legacy.

"He said it is deep in the fields. It must be buried."

"We'll need to dig for it."

So they dug and dug for days. They dug until they had dug up almost all the farmland, but they found nothing. One sibling said, "We have dug up all this land, but we haven't found our legacy. We must have missed it and I am too tired to keep digging. Still, it is spring and time to plant crops. Since we have already dug up the earth, we might as well plant this field." So they did.

Fall came and after harvesting their crops, they set to digging again, looking for their legacy. They dug and dug for days. They dug until, once again, they had dug up almost all the farmland, but they found nothing. One sibling said, "We have dug up all this land, but we haven't found our legacy. We must have missed it and I am too tired to keep digging. Still, it is spring and time to plant crops. Since we have already dug up the earth, we might as well plant as we did last year." So they did.

Yet again, fall came and they harvested their crops. This year's harvest was even bigger than the year's before. After the harvest, they dug for their legacy and, not finding it again, decided to plant their crops. This continued for a few years. During that time, they got married and started families and they lived comfortable lives off the money from selling their crops. They grew strong from working in the fields and no longer were lazy. They were healthy and happy.

One spring, they all three realized that the rich land of the farm and being able to provide for themselves and their families was the true legacy their father left them. They stopped digging for treasure and started working the farm, happy that that their father had been wise enough to leave them this great gift. They decided that they would all share the land and take good care of it, so they could leave it to their children someday.

And so they did.

Everyone doesn't own farmland to leave to his or her children. But every parent leaves something, a legacy to his or her children. It might be a house, but it could also be a value, like hard work. It might be beautiful necklace, but it could also be a belief or a religion, like Unitarian Universalism. The legacy might be a favorite book, but it could also be photographs and memories of special times.

What about the way you look? Maybe you got your eye color from your great grandmother. Maybe you got your height from your dad's side of the family. Maybe you get your sense of humor from your mother. Maybe your cousin is the person handing down the family recipe that goes back several generations. What did you receive as a legacy from an ancestor?

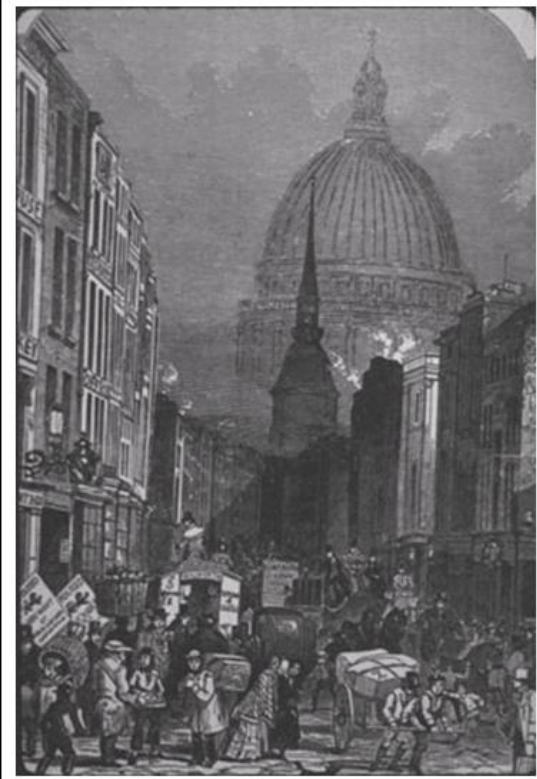
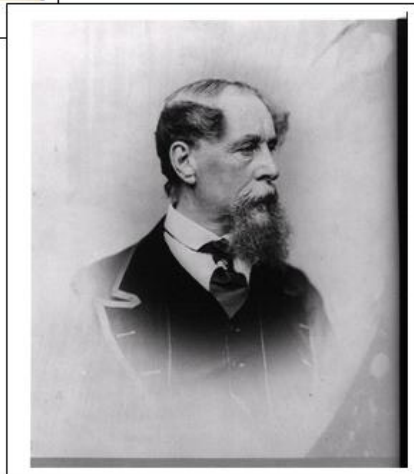
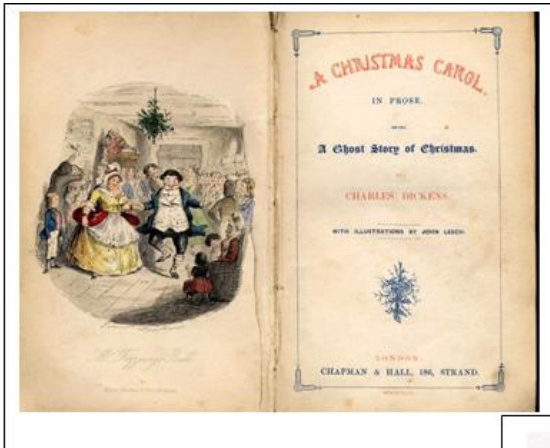
LEADER RESOURCE: ANCESTOR BOXES

[Susan B. Anthony](#) (included in this document)

[Charles Dickens](#) (included in this document)

[Hajom Kissor Singh](#) (included in this document)

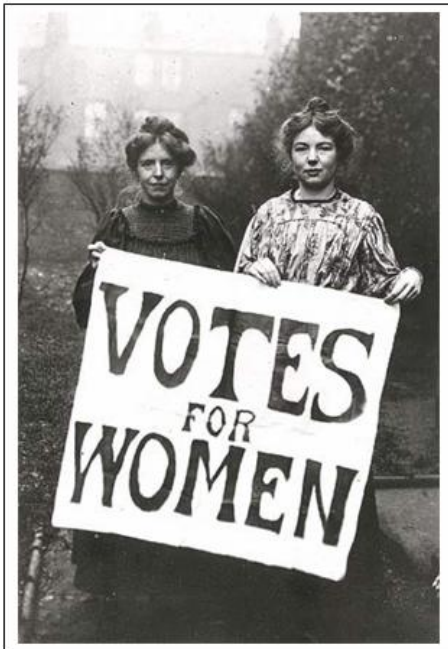
LEADER RESOURCE: CHARLES DICKENS



LEADER RESOURCE: HAJOM KISSOR SINGH



LEADER RESOURCE: SUSAN B. ANTHONY



FIND OUT MORE

Read biographies of [Charles Dickens](#) and [Hajom Kissor Singh](#) on the Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography.

A 2003 sermon by Unitarian Universalist minister Chris Buice, "[The Real Value of a Susan B. Anthony Dollar](#)," discusses Susan B. Anthony's legacy. The About.com website offers a brief [biography and images of Anthony](#).

Here are two versions of the story well known for Scrooge, Tiny Tim, and "God bless us, every one!":

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, illustrated by Carter Goodrich (New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1996)

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, illustrated by Greg Hildebrandt (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983)

SESSION 10: TANGO

INTRODUCTION

Nor need we power or splendor, wide hall or lordly dome;

The good, the true, the tender — these form the wealth of home. — Sarah J. Hale

Sarah Josepha Hale (1788-1879) was a writer, magazine editor, and staunch supporter of women's financial independence. She was also the mother of five children. Her husband died young, leaving Sarah to raise the children. Fortunately, she received assistance from other family members that enabled her to pursue her writing. She experienced first-hand a "wealthy" home.

Today more than ever we recognize that families come in many shapes, sizes and colors. People call "family" those with whom they share certain bonds and actions: caring for each other, accepting each other, and love are basic amongst these bonds. The central story in this session illustrates how these bonds can form a family as tight as one with related bloodlines.

A healthy faith family has these bonds, also. As adults, we choose our faith home. Children do not have as much liberty. Still, they can decide to claim their religious heritage and a faith home. Taking pride in the values and actions of their faith home can help. Our Unitarian Universalist principles put us in a position to not only accept but to embrace diversity. We can be proud of our religious history toward diversity, while at the same time we work toward making our congregations even more welcoming to all who affirm our principles.

The central story here is about a penguin chick, Tango, and Roy and Silo, her caring-hearted penguin parents. Our closing song refers to hearts being in a holy place and the wonders that can happen there. Wonderful things can only come in, however, if one's heart is open. Our congregations, at their best, are places full of individuals with open hearts. Hopefully, children witness this in the way their own families have been received. If the open-heartedness of your faith home is not so evident, this session can provide the impetus and some guidance to make it so.

In Activity 5: Open Hearts Make a Faith Family, you will lead the children in sharing stories about how their families became a part of the "faith family" of your congregation. You may wish to customize and send in advance Leader Resource 2: [Letter to Parents](#). (included in this document) It encourages parents to tell their children how their families entered the faith home.

The discussion in Activity 5 is introduced with an optional, simple, magic trick. If you plan to proceed directly into the discussion without using the magic trick, you may have enough time to include in your 60-minute session Alternate Activity 1: Colored Salt Jars or Alternate Activity 2: Paper Plate Families.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help children recognize that families come in all shapes, colors, and sizes
- Reinforce children's understanding that a person can enter a family at any age, and in a variety of ways
- Correlate entering and belonging to a family with entering into and belonging with a faith family

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Play a dancing game in which they choose partners
- Honor diverse families by making badges recognizing family members and their roles
- Through a story about Tango and her family, learn about family diversity
- Identify some of the elements that bond families
- Discuss how we enter faith families
- Affirm their sense of belonging by telling stories about entering and belonging in their faith family
- Optional: Increase their awareness of diversity as they tour the congregation and identify images of diversity on display
- Optional: Affirm diversity by helping others to own diverse reading material by running a book fair
- Learn that people fill more than one role in a family.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Pairing Penguins	10
Activity 2: Family Badges	10
Activity 3: Story — Tango's Family	10

Activity 4: Word Scramble	10
Activity 5: Open Hearts Make a Faith Family	10
Faith In Action: Book Fair — Long-term	15
Faith In Action: Images of Our Families in Our Faith Home — Short-term	20
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Colored Salt Jars	10
Alternate Activity 2: Paper Plate Families	10
Alternate Activity 3: Family Stories from Our Faith Home	40

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Family structure is not always visible. Unless you know the families of all the children in the Creating Home group, do not assume anything about what each child's family structure looks like. During the session, you will want to use images and examples that are inclusive and language that is accepting.

Think about the various configurations of families that might be represented in the group: single parents, foster families, stepfamilies, families with gay or lesbian parents, families with two heterosexual parents, families with divorced parents, group homes, or children being raised by grandparents or other adults. Imagine the collective wisdom that would result from each family being able to share their experiences in the world. How do you visualize it? Is it like a colorful mural stretching across the sky? What piece would your family's story add?

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- On top of the labyrinth, place the basket of stones.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. The labyrinth should be spread upon the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand. Be aware of newcomers or guests in the room. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to say with you:

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

Invite children to place their stones on the labyrinth, one at a time. Tell them they may share any joys or concerns they would like to when it is their turn to place their stone. You may say:

When Unitarian Universalists come together, we often take time to tell one another about the joys and concerns going on in our lives. Joys are the things that make you feel happy. Concerns are worries. This is your time to share a joy or concern, if you would like to do so.

Close the joys and concerns by affirming that it is very good to be together. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: PAIRING PENGUINS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A small stone or pebble
- Music CD and player

Preparation for Activity

- Choose music for the group to dance to, and obtain a player that has a "pause" function.
- If you decide to use tango music to reinforce this session's theme, be ready to describe or perhaps demonstrate a tango step; see "Leader Resources" for some helpful web links.

Description of Activity

Explain that you thought it would be fun to start off dancing today. This activity gives children a chance to play a dancing game in which they practice picking partners. Later, you can refer back to this activity to make connections between "dancing" and "Tango" and to help children understand how penguins use a pebble to express their desire to pair with another penguin.

Choose a leader randomly. You might choose the child with the closest birthday. Or think of a number between one and 20 and ask each child to guess the number; the leader is the one whose guess is closest. Everyone pairs up except for the leader.

Give the leader the pebble or stone. Explain the game with these or your own words:

When the music starts, everyone is invited to dance with their partners. You may dance until the leader chooses a partner. The leader will put the pebble on the floor, in front of the person they want to dance with. Then everyone has to stop dancing and choose new partners. One person will be left out. That person becomes the next leader, and gets to place the pebble to choose a partner next time.

Start the music and invite everyone to dance with their partners. You may need to walk the first leader through the action of placing the pebble in front of the partner he/she has chosen. Direct the children to stop dancing, and find new partners. Give the pebble to the one who is left out.

Repeat until everyone has been paired up or a reasonable length of time has passed.

If you used tango music, tell them the name and that there is a dance called the tango. You may say:

The tango is a popular dance for two partners to dance together in Spanish-speaking countries,

and many other places. People hold contests to see which pair of tango dancers has the most grace and skill.

Because a tango dance is done by two partners together, there is a common phrase that says "It takes two to tango." What do you think that means?

In your own words, tell the children that "It takes two to tango" means when you are doing something together with one other person, you are partners just like two people dancing a tango. To do a good job together, you need to communicate well, care about each other's feelings, and try to make it easy for the partner to do their part. Both people share the responsibility to make something go well.

Ask the children to share some things they have done with a partner. Suggest the dancing they have just done. Help them come up with more ideas such as playing catch, riding on a see saw, being friends, being sisters/brothers, making a painting, or taking care of a pet.

Now ask if anyone knows of a connection between pebbles or stones and penguins. Some species of penguins pick out special pebbles or stones to present to the penguin with which they wish to partner. Tell the children that while they chose partners only for a short dance, penguins sometimes choose a partner for life. When a penguin accepts another penguin's pebble, the two become a new family.

ACTIVITY 2: FAMILY BADGES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Construction paper
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors)
- Optional: Compass or circle template
- One-hole puncher
- Yarn or string
- Drawing materials, such as markers or crayons, for participants to share

Preparation for Activity

- Cut circles with diameters of 5" out of different colors of construction paper. Make at least enough circles to give each child one per family member.
- Set drawing materials at work areas for participants to share.

Description of Activity

In this activity, children have an opportunity to think about their own families and articulate the roles different family members enact. Constructing badges for their own family members helps children recognize family members' roles.

Ask the children to think about their families. To invite discussion, prompt them with these questions:

- Who started your family?
- How did your family grow?
- Who is part of your family now?

Remember to let children define their own families; a family might include grandparents, cousins, and pets. Say, in your own words:

Some children think of their family as the people who live together in their house with them. Some people think of their family as including a few important people who may live in another house, maybe even far away. The way you think about who is in your family is up to you.

Direct children's attention to the paper circles and other materials you have provided for making family badges. Invite them to draw their family members on the circles, using a different circle for each member of the family. Visit children individually. Assure them they may draw whomever they want, in any way they want.

As children complete their drawings, punch two holes at the top of each circle. Tie yarn through both holes to make a neck badge. Help the children write names on the badges, if they like. After this session, you can have children hang all the badges in your meeting space, or have them take them home to their families.

Once the badges are complete, let children put them on and take turns naming their family members from the badges. Then lead a discussion about roles. You might refer to Session 3: Beehive, if the group has done that session, and say something like this:

Remember when we talked about the bees? Remember that the bees had different jobs to perform in the hive. Do your family members have different jobs to perform, too? Does anyone work outside the home? Who works at keeping your home clean? Who works as a student, going to school?

Let children name other roles. These might include cook, homework helper, sweeper, and dishwasher. Focus first on the tangible jobs, like chores. Then, expand to jobs that are less tangible, that involve caring for and loving each other. For instance, you might ask

who helps them when they fall down and hurt their knees? Who tucks them into bed? Who hugs them?

Families do these actions for each other out of love. Sometimes family members love each other, but can't do all the things they would like to do. Sometimes, even though people are not related biologically, they perform the roles of families and so become family.

If you are about to present the story, "[A Penguin Family](#)," (included in this document) you may say:

Here is a story about creatures that might not have been born as family, but they became family through love.

ACTIVITY 3: STORY — TANGO'S FAMILY (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of story, "[A Penguin Family](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: A copy of the book *And Tango Makes Three*
- Optional: Computer with internet access
- Optional: "[A Penguin Family](#)" [coloring sheet](#), and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review, download, and print out the story, "A Penguin Family."
- To show the children illustrations, you may wish to obtain the book *And Tango Makes Three* by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005). Another alternative, if your meeting space has internet access, is to show the group the [online version of the book](#).
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

Gather the group. Invite children to sit comfortably to hear a story about Tango, her parents, and how they became a family.

Using the story, "A Penguin Family," and/or other resources you have gathered, tell the story. At the conclusion, guide a discussion to bring out or make the observation that Roy, Silo, and Tango love each other and fulfill the roles of a family (taking care of each other. You may ask:

- How do we know that Tango, Roy, and Silo are a family?

- When Tango hatched out of her shell, how did she know that Roy and Silo were her parents?

Remind children that some people come into a family by birth; some by adoption. How did Tango enter her family? Adoptive people parents, like Silo and Roy, want a little one to share their home.

You may say:

There are many ways that people make a commitment to stay together, love each other, and care for each other. Sometimes adults become a family through a civil union or marriage or by deciding to share a home together.

Ask for a show of hands by anyone who knows adults who have made a family together in one of those ways.

Say, in your own words:

Families come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Some families have one parent; some have two or more. Some families have two mommies or two daddies. Some families don't have any children. Sometimes one person is a family on their own. Sometimes a person and their pets are a family. Some families have grandparents and guardians. Some children have two homes and two families.

If you have time, you may wish to lead the group in sharing stories about different families they know. Or, invite children to make up a pretend family that has a different configuration than their own. Children may like to invent names, ages, and family roles for the people in a "pretend" family.

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "A Penguin Family" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 4: WORD SCRAMBLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Letters, cut from Leader Resource 1, [Family Word Scramble](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1: Family Word Scramble. Cut out each of the 16 letters on the

sheet. Make four piles of letters so that each pile contains the correct letters to spell "care," "feed," "love," and "safe."

- Identify four separate work surfaces where children can unscramble the letters.
- Optional: You may wish to post a sheet of newsprint with the words children will try to form. The group may include some who cannot yet read or spell words, but most children in kindergarten and first grade can recognize and match letters.

Description of Activity

This activity will help children identify some of the elements that bond families. Say, in your own words:

You can't always look at a group of people and tell if they are a family or not. So, what makes a family? What do families have in common? Some of the answers are on these pieces of paper.

Place a stack of four letters, face down and scrambled, on each of the work surfaces. Tell the children that they will work in smaller groups to unscramble the letters they are given, and that each group has the letters to make a different word.

Form four groups, mixing children who might be stronger spellers with others who may not yet spell or recognize letters. Invite the children to move the letters around until they spell a word for something people do for each other in a family.

To make the task easier, you can tell them the words they are looking for: "care," "feed," "love," and "safe." You may wish to write the words on newsprint and post them as the small groups begin working.

Visit each group and assist as needed. After the letters are unscrambled, ask the children how each of the four words relates to families. Encourage the children to think of examples from the story about Tango, from their own families, or from other families they know.

ACTIVITY 5: OPEN HEARTS MAKE A FAITH FAMILY (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A few quarters

Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether you will use the magic trick to introduce the discussion about "faith family." If you plan to use the magic trick, practice it so you can do it easily while leading the group.

- Optional: Contact parents in advance so they can prepare their children for this activity with stories to share about their families' active involvement in the congregation. You may wish to use Leader Resource 2, Letter to Parents.

Description of Activity

Guide the children to discuss how we enter faith families. Say, in your own words:

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe all families are important. We welcome many different types of families in our faith home. Can you name some of the families that belong to our faith family?

You can clarify the question by using children's own families as examples. Be sure you mention different kinds of families, including single parents, adults who live alone, and adults who do not live with young children.

If you are using the magic trick to open a discussion, say, in your own words:

I wonder if people and their families become part of a faith family by magic? Who would like to see a magic trick?

Here is the trick: Sit at a fairly high table. Take a quarter and hold it up with your right hand so everyone can see it. Tell the children you will make the quarter disappear and reappear. Put the quarter in your left hand, place your right elbow on the table, make your right hand into a fist and place your head upon your right fist. Close your left hand, which has the coin, into a fist and rub your elbow. Pretend that the act has failed by saying "Tadah!" and "accidentally" dropping the coin onto the table. Pick up the coin with your right hand, say you will try it again, place the coin in your left hand and repeat the same steps, dropping the coin on the table.

Pick up the coin with your right hand and pretend to put it in your left hand while saying you will try it again. Rub your right elbow with your left hand and open your left hand to show that the coin has disappeared. Then pretend to pull the coin out from behind your ear.

Invite some volunteers to learn the magic trick and show them how to perform it. Let them pair up and try it on each other. Assist any children who need it.

Now ask again (or for the first time, if you have chosen not to use the magic trick):

Do people become part of our faith family by magic? Not here one day, then just appear here the next?

Wait for their answer.

No? Then how?

Guide a discussion with these words, or your own:

Once people start attending worship, coming to religious education programs, and becoming involved in the life of our congregation, they become part of our faith family. How is being part of a faith family the same as being part of your family?

Listen for and affirm answers that echo concepts the group has already explored concerning families. For example, members care for each other. A parent gives a baby a bath at home; someone who belongs to a faith family may bring food to the home of another member who is sick. Members perform different roles in a faith family. Instead of mother, father, uncle, and sister, a faith family may have a minister, an educator, a choir leader, a piano player, and students. Members of a faith home do necessary jobs such as cleaning up after coffee hour, handing out the Order of Service, and watering plants in the faith home. As members, we do some things because they have to be done (such as mowing the lawn) and others just because we want to make other members feel loved (such as providing flowers for the altar or celebrating birthdays).

Invite children to share any stories they might have about when they started coming to this congregation. Ask them to tell about the activities they and their families do at the faith home or with its other members. As you go, make any connections you can between the activities that take place in a family home and the activities that take place in a faith home, and who does them.

Affirm that is great to have a faith family because that is more people to love.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, bold marker, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the

group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.

- Customize, print out, and photocopy the [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the word "family" with bold marker on an index card or post-it.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice.

Tell the group that it is now time to share a closing ritual.

Invite the children to take their stones from the labyrinth and return them to the basket. Then, ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The word for our Word Wall today is "family."

Show the group the index card or post-it on which you have written "family." Post it on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite participants to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,

When our heart is in a holy place.

We are blessed with love and amazing grace.

When our heart is in a holy place.

Say in your own words:

Families are similar in many ways, but each family is unique and special and different, too. Just like you. Just like me. Thank you for sharing your differences with our faith community here today. See you next time!

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind participants to give the handout to their parents.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: BOOK FAIR — LONG-TERM (20 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Work with a local bookstore to arrange the logistics of displaying books and taking and processing orders.

Description of Activity

Engage the children in an activity that will make books with images of diverse families available to the wider congregation. Many families love reading together. There are a good many books available for children that show family diversity. Why not hold a small book fair and feature these titles?

You can do this in a few different ways. You can work with your local bookstore to set up a book fair. Order three copies each of ten to 15 titles for a variety of ages and reading levels. Display the books before and after a worship service. Promote the book fair with flyers and posters that the children can help you create and distribute. You could sell books for the amount you paid (don't forget taxes!) or use the book fair as a fundraiser. Return any unsold copies to the bookstore.

Another way to construct the book fair might be to display library copies of the books you have chosen, and take pre-paid orders. Check with your local bookstore to make sure the titles you plan to sell are still in print and can be ordered. Have blank bookplates on hand. Suggest that individuals without a specific child for whom to buy might purchase copies for the congregation's library. Around the holidays, you could invite people to purchase books to donate as holiday gifts for children in need.

If you decide to use this event as a fundraiser, you could use the proceeds to purchase multiethnic posters for the religious education meeting areas. The [UUA Bookstore](#) carries many books for children with diverse family images – a good place to start searching for titles. See “Leader Resources” for other suggestions.

FAITH IN ACTION: IMAGES OF OUR FAMILIES IN OUR FAITH HOME – SHORT-TERM (20 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Tour your faith home with your co-leader, looking specifically for images of many kinds of families.

- If images of diverse kinds of families are abundant in your faith home, plan a guided tour of these images for the children.
- If your faith home lacks a variety of family images, shape this activity around changing the situation. Gather photographs, posters, magazine illustrations, and other visual resources that portray family diversity (see “Leaders Resources” for suggestions). Identify one or more locations in your faith home where you can create or enhance a display. Make a plan to involve the children in posting new display materials in your faith home. For example, you might bring a catalog of posters to a session and invite the children to help you pick some to order for display in the faith home. Or, you might invite the children's families to provide or pose for family photographs which the group can then display in a shared congregational space.

Description of Activity

The aim of this activity is to focus children's attention on representations of diverse kinds of families. It is important for people to experience affirmation in their faith home. Whether the children take a tour of existing images or work with you to create a new display, they will have a chance to recognize family diversity in their faith home and affirm their own families' places within it, as they engage with images of different kinds of families.

If your activity will be a tour of the congregational space, tell the group, in your own words:

We are going to take a walk together and search for families in our faith home. We will look for pictures of different kinds of families, including some pictures of real people we know. Look for pictures of families in photographs and paintings, on the walls, on bulletin boards, or maybe in a newsletter or brochure about events at our congregation.

If your congregation has a website, plan to stop at a computer with internet access so the children can see pictures of different families posted there.

As you walk, encourage children to call out the images they see. You may want to stop together to examine a few images more closely. Invite children to identify the members of different family configurations you see pictured. Remember, if you do not know the individuals whose images you see, there are no wrong guesses – two adult men could be a couple, brothers, cousins, or friends. Look for images of different family configurations (single parents with children, grandparents with grandchildren, same sex couples, parents with trans-ethnically adopted children, adults with elderly parents).

And, look for families whose members do not look alike (different color skin, differently abled, far apart in age).

Whatever way you do this activity, aim to ensure that the children see themselves and their families mirrored in the images of families displayed in your congregation's facilities and publications.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Discuss the session with your co-leader. Which session went well? Are there any that needed more preparation? Did the ways children participated in discussion make it clear what they understood and areas where they were confused? What would change if you led this session again?

TAKING IT HOME

Nor need we power or splendor, wide hall or lordly dome;

The good, the true, the tender – these form the wealth of home. – Sarah J. Hale

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Today we talked about families. Children heard the true story of Roy and Silo, two male penguins who partnered and raised a chick, Tango. This was our starting point to discuss how families come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. We not only discussed what makes families different from one another, we talked about what makes them the same. We shared ways people in families care for one another.

We also discussed our faith family: the people who are part of our Unitarian Universalist congregation, our faith home.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

You can expand on the discussion about families that we had today by sharing stories of your own family. Children this age generally love to hear stories about how their parents met, and how they decided to form a family. In families where divorce and/or remarriage is part of the story, sharing memories and feelings can be a helpful part of processing the ways families can change, as well as reinforcing the lesson that families come in different shapes and sizes. This is also a good opportunity to repeat stories with children who have been adopted that both honor their birth families and reaffirm their place in their forever family.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Ritual

We talked in our class about the different roles or jobs that people have in families, but you can also honor these roles through a family ritual. Around the dinner

table, before bedtime or at another calm period in the day you might want to light your "hearth fire." Then, focus on one family member at a time, having each other person in the family say "I honor you for the way you..." completing the sentence with the different things the person does for the family. These could be tangible efforts, such as earning money to support the family or taking out the garbage, but they could just as well be roles like "making us laugh," "giving great hugs," or "appreciating my banana pancakes."

You might prefer to do this ritual over the course of days, so that before dinner each night a different person is honored.

A Family Adventure

In the story of Roy, Silo and Tango, the children heard how a penguin makes an offer of "marriage" to another penguin by presenting a specially selected pebble. During a trip to the beach, the river or simply in your own backyard you can go on a hunt for special pebbles. You may be amazed how, if you look closely, there are pebbles of surprising colors, shapes or textures. Encourage family members to choose one very special pebble that they've found to give as a gift to another family member.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

For children's books with illustrations that reflect family diversity, visit the [online Unitarian Universalist Bookstore](#). You will find *And Tango Makes Three* by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson, illustrated by Henry Cole (Simon & Schuster, 2006), which tells the story of the penguin family we discussed in this session.

Also check out the books offered by the [Global Fund for Children](#).

[Lee & Low Publishers](#) specializes in multicultural books for children.

Many resources can be found by searching online, talking to librarians, inquiring in bookstores, or looking through book lists available from schools and libraries.

A wide variety of books and other resources on family diversity are listed at [Bay Area Mosaic](#).

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: COLORED SALT JARS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- An empty egg carton or a few styrofoam cups for each participant
- Salt
- Colored chalk
- Small empty glass jars with lids, such as baby food jars, for all participants plus one extra

- Optional: Paint and brushes

Preparation for Activity

- Practice coloring salt with colored chalk in a styrofoam cup or egg carton to make sure you can demonstrate how to do it.

Description of Activity

To help children appreciate how people in families take care of one another, invite children to make a reminder of their families with colored salt and glass jars.

Before preparing the salt or explaining the activity, you may want to invite children to paint the lids of their jars. You may suggest they paint a first or last initial that represents themselves or their family, use the color of their front door, or choose another way to relate the decoration to their family. If you are using small jars with corks instead of lids, you can skip this part.

If children have done Activity 2: Family Badges, count each child's name badges. For each badge (each family member), put a few spoonfuls of salt into an individual egg compartment or a cup.

Give the children different colors of chalk for each filled egg compartment or cup. Invite children to pick one color to represent each family member.

To color the salt, rub a piece of chalk into the salt until both are the same color. This colored salt resembles sand; children can easily transfer it into their jars.

You might want to limit the number of egg compartments or cups you fill for each child; it may take children some time to color their salt different colors. A child who has more family members than colors can use some colors to represent more than one family member.

Using the extra jar and your own family as an example, demonstrate taking a spoon and adding multiple layers of colored salt to the jar. As you add the salt, say which family member it represents and name some way that person helps take care of the family.

Then, ask the children to fill their own jars. Each time he/she adds a new color, ask each child to share something that family member does to care for others in the family, or something the child does to care for that family member. Children may like to think of ways two family members represented by adjacent layers connect. For instance, a child who starts off with a yellow layer that represents a grandfather might say "I help my grandfather weed in the garden." Next, the child might add a red layer to represent his/her mother and say "My grandfather brought my mother ice cream to give us all for dessert."

The thinner the layers, the longer it will take to fill each jar. Encourage the children to make rather wide layers of

three to five spoonfuls each. Top off the jars with corks or their painted tops and let the children take them home.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: PAPER PLATE FAMILIES (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Plain paper plates
- Colored markers or crayons

Description of Activity

This hands-on activity demonstrates that people fill more than one role in their families.

Give each child at least three paper plates. Invite children to color the paper plates to look like faces of their own family members. Each child will need at least three, but allow participants to make as many as they like.

When all of the children have finished at least three plates, demonstrate how to mix and match the plates to show different family roles. For example, Susie, who is Kayla's mom, could also be Timothy's aunt. Kayla is Timothy's cousin. Timothy is Susie's nephew.

Invite volunteers to show and tell about the family members they have drawn. Talk through as many configurations as time permits. It's okay to repeat configurations. Mixing and matching will demonstrate different family make-ups.

After mixing, use one or two plates as an example. Ask if a female plate could be a mom, a daughter, or both a mom and a daughter. Do this with different plates and different roles; for example, an uncle can also be a brother, a son, a father, a stepfather, or a cousin.

Share with the class that performing more than one role in a family is a great way for people to connect to each other differently. Relate it back to the story. Silo is partner to Roy, but dad to Tango. He performs different duties as a partner than he does as a dad. This makes life more interesting.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: FAMILY STORIES FROM OUR FAITH HOME (40 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Invite parents or other adults from all the children's families to come and share their stories about finding and participating in this faith home. You may wish to adapt and distribute Leader Resource 3, Invitation to Parents.

Description of Activity

If you have time for it and expect good participation from children's adult family members, this activity is an alternative to Activity 5: Open Hearts Make a Faith Family, a discussion in which children tell about their families' involvement in the congregation. Invite an adult from each family to come and share the family's story about how they found this faith home and the ways they are involved. Modify Leader Resource 3: Invitation to Parents and email or distribute it to all children's families a few weeks ahead of time. You may wish to follow up with confirmation phone calls during the week preceding the session.

Ask the adults to bring photographs, dedication certificates, or anything else that symbolizes their connection to their faith home. Before the session, calculate how many adults are going to share and how much time you have for the session. Give the adults good guidance as to how long they should speak; it should not be more than two or three minutes. Make sure you give children opportunities to help the adult tell their family's story.

This activity may not be a good choice if some children's families are not active in or do not attend your congregation, or if you feel some families might not participate. You don't want one or two children feeling left out, which has a greater probability of happening in a large group.

However, if the group is small and adults are likely to be responsive to your invitation, this activity can provide a great opportunity for children and families to create a narrative around their experiences at the congregation. The session can strengthen not only a child's sense of belonging, but also that of their family.

STORY: A PENGUIN FAMILY

At the Central Park Zoo in New York City, there were two penguins named Roy and Silo, who adored each other. It is typical for penguins to find a partner, a mate – one other penguin that is special to them. Usually, it is one female and one male penguin that like each other and become a penguin couple. They have fun together and help each other out.

When a female lays an egg, her partner takes turns with her, sitting on the egg to keep it warm so it will hatch. Then a baby penguin pokes out of its shell to be born, and the two penguins become its parents and take care of it together.

Well, Roy and Silo were partners. The zookeepers could all see that they did everything together that the other penguin couples did. They talked to each other in penguin language. They swam together. They would wrap their necks around each other to show their affection. But one thing they did not do was lay an egg and take turns sitting on it. Only female penguins lay eggs, and Roy and Silo were both males.

The zookeepers could see that Roy and Silo wanted to be penguin parents, though. One time, a zookeeper saw that Roy and Silo were taking turns sitting on a rock. The rock was shaped like a penguin egg. Roy and Silo were keeping it warm so it would hatch. Of course, the rock would never hatch into a baby penguin.

Then the zookeepers noticed that another pair of penguins, one female and one male, had two eggs that they were trying to keep warm at the same time. The zookeepers knew that this would be very hard for them to do. They decided to give both eggs a good chance to hatch into baby penguins, and at the same time give Roy and Silo a chance to become penguin parents.

The zookeepers gave Roy and Silo the egg that needed to be kept warm. First Roy sat on the egg, and then Silo. They took turns keeping the egg warm, just like the other penguin partners. And finally, one day, Roy and Silo's egg began to hatch. And out popped a perfectly healthy baby girl penguin.

The zookeepers welcomed the new baby penguin with the name "Tango." A tango is a dance for two dancers. To dance a tango, the partners have to stand very close together and understand each other's movements. When two tango dancers have a good partnership, their dancing looks very lovely and graceful. The way Roy and Silo were such good partners together reminded the zookeepers of a beautiful tango dance.

After Tango was born, Roy and Silo did what parents do. They kept Tango warm. They brought her food in their beaks and fed it to her. And in a few months, Tango was ready to do most things for herself. Her parents Roy and Silo raised her very well.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: FAMILY WORD SCRAMBLE

C	A	R	E
S	A	F	E
F	E	E	D
L	O	V	E

LEADER RESOURCE 2: LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Creating Home Families:

On [day, date,] our group will discuss how our families became involved in this congregation. We will ask each child to share any stories they have about how they first came to this congregation or their early experiences here.

It will be helpful for you to discuss this topic with your child beforehand. Many young children do not know when, how, or why they started coming to a particular congregation – whether from birth or since a later time. Please tell your child the story of how your family entered this faith home.

Your story will be unique. That is part of the lesson: We don't all enter our faith family in the same way. Perhaps you have been in this congregation all your life. Maybe you were a member of another congregation in the past and changed your affiliation. Maybe you moved to this city and started attending this congregation. Some families search for a faith home to seek support in raising their children in an environment of shared values. Whatever your story, think of how to share it with your child.

You might tell the story to your child several times and ask him/her to tell it back to you. You could make it into a whole family discussion at mealtime or in the car. This telling and retelling will go a long way toward strengthening your child's feelings of belonging in the congregation.

Thank you for taking the time to share these experiences with your child!

[Co-leaders]

LEADER RESOURCE 3: INVITATION TO PARENTS

Adapt and distribute this invitation to parents and adult family members if you are doing Alternate Activity 3: Stories from Our Faith Home.

Dear Creating Home Families:

On [day, date], our group will discuss how our families became involved in this congregation. We would love to have at least one adult member come share the story of how your family found this faith home. Your story should take no more than two minutes to share. You may bring photographs or other visual aids.

Your story will be different from other stories, and that is part of the lesson: We don't all enter our faith family in the same way. Perhaps you have been in this congregation all your life. Maybe you were a member of another UU congregation before this one. Or perhaps you come from another faith tradition. Some families search for a faith home to seek support in raising their children among people who share similar values. Whatever your story, think about how to tell it to a five- to seven-year-old child and come share it with us.

Share your story with your child before the session, so they can help you tell it.

Please confirm that you will attend. We look forward to sharing this experience with you.

Thank you!

[Co-leader names, phones, emails]

FIND OUT MORE

Search the online archives of *The New York Times* for Dinitia Smith's February 7, 2004 Arts section story about how Roy and Silo, a devoted pair of male chinstrap penguins at Central Park Zoo, came to hatch and parent the penguin chick Tango. The story is called "Love That Dare Not Squeak Its Name."

SESSION 11: BLESS THIS MEAL

INTRODUCTION

Once the guest has eaten and drunk at your table, the guest becomes kin... beggar or enemy, friend or chief, if they knock on your door, it will open; if they seek your shelter, it will be given, and if they ask for hospitality, give them your bread and wine... for who knows when you may need the help of a fellow human?
— Keri Hulme

Poet and writer Keri Hulme was born and lives in New Zealand. Her writing is heavily influenced by Maori culture, which is part of her personal heritage.

Many cultures consider the sharing of a meal to be an important step that transforms strangers into friends and sometimes into family. Think of all the preparation that goes into wedding rehearsal dinners! Starting a new family almost always involves food, and food will continue to be important in the life of the family. Bonding over food seems to be deeply natural. After all, sharing food-gathering resources is almost certainly one of the reasons animals gather in families.

Food is important to us. It is life sustaining at the most basic level. Yet we have not necessarily kept it basic. Think of the elaborate preparation that goes into special or holiday meals. Look at the ritualization of eating found in many cultures — from Shabbat meals and Passover Seders to Thanksgiving dinners and Japanese tea ceremonies, from religious fasting and breaking a fast together, to church potlucks. The significance of sharing a meal is universal.

Often at such a meal, a grace is said. A grace provides an opportunity to acknowledge the value of the food itself, and perhaps the company or the occasion for the meal, lifting the experience from the gastronomical to the spiritual. Even families that do not say grace at every meal will sometimes feel moved to do so at special occasions.

However, many Unitarian Universalist families, out of a desire to establish rituals of their faith at home, are saying grace at regular mealtimes. Some families actively work toward dedicating more time to simple family activities, like shared meals, to counteract the hustle and bustle of the world around us. Sharing a meal and our thoughts about the day can be a ritual that helps to hold a family together.

Some children may belong to families where saying grace is a spiritual practice well established. For others, saying grace will be new, or something parents prefer not to do at home. How do your religious education

program and your congregation handle saying grace or blessings over food?

GOALS

This session will:

- Help participants understand the purposes of blessings over food
- Introduce mealtime graces to be used at home and in the faith home
- Focus participants' attention on how Unitarian Universalists bless food
- Identify other ways we bless places and beings associated with our family and faith home
- Demonstrate goodwill and community around mealtime

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Create table tents for family and faith homes
- Hear a story about the joys of sharing not just food, but goodwill and community at a meal
- Learn blessings and graces to use at their family and faith homes
- Name ways we commonly bless
- Practice saying grace and enjoying community at mealtime
- Optional: Distinguish between activities shared with family and with faith family

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Making Table Tents	15
Activity 2: Story — The Best Meal	10
Activity 3: Graces and Blessings	10
Activity 4: Breaking Bread Together	15
Faith In Action: Families Help at a Food Bank — Long-term	10
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Family Time	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

If you could share a meal with anyone you chose, who would you invite? What would you serve? Would the occasion be quiet and reflective, or joyous and raucous? Think about your perfect meal with the perfect guests in any setting you like. Now ask yourself: What would be the appropriate grace for such a meal?

OPENING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- On top of the labyrinth, place the basket of stones.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. The labyrinth should be spread upon the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand. Be aware of newcomers or guests in the room. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to say with you:

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

Tell the children that one at a time, they may place their stones on the labyrinth. You may say:

Here we are on our journey together celebrating both our family home and our faith home. Today, while placing your stone upon the labyrinth, please say your name and any joys or concerns you want to share. Because we will be talking about thankfulness today, you might want to also tell us about something that makes you thankful.

When all the children are done, name something that makes you thankful. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: MAKING TABLE TENTS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Sheets of paper, preferably card stock, for all participants
- Crayons and markers
- Optional: Colored tissue paper, scissors (including left-handed scissors), and glue sticks or tape

Preparation for Activity

- Download Leader Resource, Table Graces. You may wish to substitute a grace your congregation uses for the text of one of the graces. Or you can edit the page so the same grace is repeated four times. Decide how many of each template (each grace) to make.
- You can fold the sheets of paper in half or in quarters to make table tents. You may also wish to glue a grace to one side of each table tent. Or, you may have the children do both of these tasks.
- Set out crayons and markers on work tables.
- Optional: If you have enough time, you may have the children decorate the side that does not have the grace with colored tissue paper. They can tear tissue paper in bits and glue the bits in a design they like, or you can help them cut shapes out from that side of the table tent and paste tissue paper on the underside, for a "stained glass" effect. Provide an assortment of colored tissue paper, scissors, and glue sticks or tape at worktables.

Description of Activity

In this activity, children decorate a table tent imprinted with the words of a grace blessing. Children should take theirs home, but, if you have time, let each child make a few extra. Give these to the congregation to use at faith home gatherings that involve sharing food.

Show the children a folded table tent. Explain that they will glue a grace blessing to one side and decorate the other side. Indicate the materials they will use to decorate their table tents.

Before you distribute the table tents, explain that a grace blessing is words family or friends can say together to give thanks before eating a meal at the table. As you distribute the table tents, show children how to flatten it to decorate it, and how to make it stand again when they are done. You may say, in your own words:

When a table tent sits upon the table where people will share food together, it can be more than just a decoration. Looking at the decoration you will make and saying the words of the grace together help remind people to be thankful for the food that we eat and for the chance to be with our family and friends.

If in an earlier session the children made wax-resistant chalice pictures (Session 2, Alternate Activity 1), a "stained glass" table tent they make with tissue paper will nicely match the chalice pictures they have already brought home. If you have colored tissue paper, invite the children to tear or cut some small pieces to glue for decoration. Or, you can show them how to cut shapes from one side of the table tent and glue pieces of tissue paper behind the shapes for a see-through "stained glass" effect. Some may need some help. Allow children to combine "stained glass" and coloring, as they choose.

When children finish decorating, help them fold and crease the table tents so they stand.

As you clean up, keep table tents handy. Children will use them for Activity 3: Graces and you will want to use at least one for Activity 4: Breaking Bread Together.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE BEST MEAL (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of story, ["The Best Meal"](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: ["The Best Meal" coloring sheet](#), and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review, download, and print out story, "The Best Meal."
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

The group will hear a story about the joys of sharing goodwill and community at mealtime and reflect on what makes a meal "good." Gather the children to hear the story.

At the conclusion, ask the group:

- What do you think made the meal the chef shared with the family so special?
- Why couldn't the chef and her assistants make the same amazing meal, even when they had the recipe?

- Has your family ever had a special meal, perhaps during the holidays? What did you like about that meal?
- Have you ever shared a meal with your faith family? What did you like about it?

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "The Best Meal" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 3: GRACES AND BLESSINGS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of Leader Resource 2, [Four Graces](#) (included in this document)
- Four table tents, each with different grace words, from the table tents children made in Activity 1: [Making Table Tents](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Copies of Leader Resource 2, Four Graces for each child to take home

Preparation for Activity

- Review and download Leader Resource 2, Four Graces. If your congregation uses a grace you would like to teach the children, substitute it for one of the graces provided, using your own word processing program.
- Print out a copy for yourself. If you will distribute Leader Resource 2, Four Graces for children to take home with their table tents, make additional copies.
- Have some finished table tents on hand to show children where the grace is printed.

Description of Activity

Children will learn that a grace is both a "thank you" and a blessing. They will learn that a grace is for mealtimes and a blessing can be for many different occasions. And, they will hear what all of the graces sound like so they can help to say or sing them at home before a meal, if their families would like to do so.

Show the children where the grace words are printed on their table tents. Tell them that the table tents they made each have different graces on them; there are four different graces.

Say, in your own words:

Some people, before eating their meal, say a blessing or a grace. Many times, this grace is a way of expressing gratitude or thanks for the food and other things that make our life joyful. Some people say the same grace at every meal. Some families go around the table and let everyone say what they are thankful for having in their lives, like what we did earlier.

Ask the group:

Has anyone here ever said a grace before a meal? How do you like to say grace?

Allow some responses. Then say:

All of those are good. Here are some more ideas for graces you can say.

Read or sing the graces to the group, one grace at a time. Choose one that you can teach them. Sing or say a line, and ask the children to repeat it. Then have them repeat two lines at a time back to you. Then, sing or say the entire grace together.

Ask the children which grace they like best, and why. Some children may like a particular grace that is not printed on the table tent they decorated. You can invite children to trade table tents with one another, or distribute additional copies of Leader Resource 2, Four Graces.

Ask the children about ways of giving thanks they have participated in at their family or faith home. How many have taken turns saying something they are grateful for at Thanksgiving, or at another time?

Ask if anyone can tell you what it means to "bless." A dictionary definition would be "to confer well-being or prosperity" (*American Heritage Dictionary*). Tell the group:

A blessing is a way to wish something or someone well, to pray that good things will happen to a person or group of people, an animal, or a place. We may bless various things, living and non-living, at our family home and our faith home.

Now tell the children that a "grace" can be a kind of blessing, as well as a way of giving thanks. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, a grace is "a short prayer of blessing or thanksgiving said before or after a meal."

Ask, "Who has the power to bless?" Give the answer, in these words or your own:

We all do. We are all interconnected. We are connected to each other and to life. We can all call upon the spirit of life to wish happiness upon each other. When we come together as a faith

family in our congregation we can combine our good wishes to bless each other and the world. We express appreciation for each other and wish others well.

Make sure the children sitting there with you know what a blessing they are to their families and the congregation.

ACTIVITY 4: BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A large loaf of bread
- Water or juice for all participants
- Tablecloth(s), paper plates, paper cups, and napkins
- A chalice for each table
- A table tent with the grace you will say, made in Activity 1: Making Table Tents, for each table
- Optional: Ingredients, mixing bowls, serving bowls, and utensils, if needed, if children will work together on making a snack to share
- Hand sanitizer

Preparation for Activity

- Find out about participants' food allergies and restrictions before you obtain a large loaf of bread to share. Be sure the bread is something everyone can eat, or use a substitute food.
- Identify a large table or a comfortable floor space where the entire group can sit in a circle at individual place settings, say a blessing together, and share bread. If space limitations prevent everyone from sitting together, determine where smaller groups can sit.
- Optional: If you have time, consider extending Activity 4: Breaking Bread Together by engaging the children in preparing a more complicated snack together, by inviting another group to break bread with the children, or both. Find recipes and guidance for having children prepare snacks together in Leader Resource 3: [Snack Recipes](#) (included in this document).
- Optional: If children will prepare a snack together by combining foods, as suggested in Leader Resource 3: Snack Recipes or by using another recipe, obtain the ingredients you will use and bowls for combining and serving the snack, along with any necessary utensils. Identify a work space for children to use and set

hand sanitizer, food ingredients, and bowls there.

- Set out the tablecloth(s), chalice(s), table tent(s), plates, cups, and napkins for children to use as they prepare the table(s).

Description of Activity

The children will prepare to eat together, say grace, and break bread with their peers, giving them a chance to experience fellowship around sharing a meal.

Engage all of the children in preparation; make sure everyone has a role. If you have decided to extend this activity by having children make a snack together, some can mix ingredients while others set a tablecloth upon the table(s) or floor, set out plates and cups, and place a chalice and table tent in the center of the seating area. Others can pour drinks into the cups.

Start with having everyone either wash their hands or use hand sanitizer. Once the table is set, place the bread in the center, along with any bowls of snacks the children have made together. Ask the children to clean their hands again. Then call everyone to a place at the table.

Invite the children to hold hands, and lead the group in saying or singing the grace printed on the table tent(s). While the children eat, start a conversation in which everyone has a chance to speak. You might ask everyone to tell the group their favorite food.

After the snack, ask everyone to help clean up.

Although it would take more planning and more time, consider inviting another group to join you for snack. Sharing what they are doing with another group will help the children absorb the learning they will do in this session. It will also give them an experience to bring to Session 12: John Murray, which focuses on hospitality. Ideal guests might be younger children or senior members of the congregation. Children of this age may become anxious about presenting themselves well if older children or youth are their guests.

Including All Participants

Find out from parents about any allergies among the children and plan accordingly. Avoid nuts in any shared snack, as nut allergies are common.

Make sure every child has a role in preparing the snack as well as cleaning up.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed

- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, bold marker, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the words "grace" and "blessing" with bold marker on index cards or post-its.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice. Invite the children to take their stones from the labyrinth, place them in the basket, and return to the circle.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The words for our Word Wall today are "grace" and "blessing."

Show the group the index cards or post-its on which you have written "grace" and "blessing." Post them on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite participants to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,

When our heart is in a holy place.

We are blessed with love and amazing grace.

When our heart is in a holy place.

Say in your own words:

Thank you for breaking bread with me today. I leave you with a traditional blessing from the country of Ireland.

Then, give this blessing:

May the blessing of light be on you —
Light without and light within.
May the blessed sunlight shine on you and
warm your heart
Till it glows like a great peat fire,
So that the stranger may come and warm
himself at it,
And also a friend.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind the children to give the handout to their parents, and dismiss the group.

FAITH IN ACTION: FAMILIES HELP AT A FOOD BANK — LONG-TERM (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Identify a food bank, the kitchen of a homeless shelter, a food recovery program, or another organization or service in your area that welcomes families, including young children, to assist in their work. Find out which projects need volunteers and what the volunteers do, including where and when.
- Talk to the children's parents and your director of religious education to gauge interest in and availability to participate in the service project(s) you have identified.
- Prepare your religious education program's standard permission slip for off-site activities.

Description of Activity

Food on the table is as much a blessing as the company being shared. Some people struggle to provide meals for their families. Children and their families could spend time helping to prepare and serve a meal at a shelter. However, it is not just the homeless that have food struggles. The working poor have them also, and to help this population many communities have food banks or food recovery services.

You may need to do some research to find these agencies. Members of your Justice or Social Action Committee might be able to help.

Once you have the name of an agency, call and ask how the children and their families can help. May they stack cans in a food pantry? May they help fill grocery bags for pick-up? If you pick a food recovery agency, you might visit a restaurant or food store near your

congregation and recruit them to become part of the food recovery network.

When you introduce this Faith in Action activity to the children, you may like to ask others in your congregation who have volunteered with the same agency or done a similar service project to present it with you. When you present the plan, remind children that the "thank you" a grace signifies before a meal includes the food itself as well as the company of the people we'll share it with, and the other comforts and joys for which we are grateful.

Whatever project you do, try to arrange for the children to tour the facilities and hear from an agency or service worker about why their work is important and what children can do to help eradicate hunger.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Remember that saying grace will now become a regular spiritual practice for the group. Keep at least one table tent somewhere in the meeting space where it will not get lost or tossed. Think about other graces you know that you would like to share with the children.

The story for this session was longer than most. Were you able to tell the story as opposed to reading it aloud? Did the children stay focused?

Did the children work well together at preparing to break bread together? If not, what would you do differently next time? Which activities went well?

TAKING IT HOME

Once the guest has eaten and drunk at your table, the guest becomes kin...beggar or enemy, friend or chief, if they knock on your door, it will open; if they seek your shelter, it will be given, and if they ask for hospitality, give them your bread and wine...for who knows when you may need the help of a fellow human?
— Keri Hulme

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Your child is bringing home a table tent that they created in Creating Home today. One side of the table tent features a grace or table blessing. We will say grace in Creating Home whenever we share food together, for the rest of this program. We discussed that grace can be both a blessing and a way to express thanks. We also talked about the similarities and differences between activities we participate in with our family and our faith family. If you use the terms "faith family" and "faith home," this will reinforce the meaning of these terms for your child.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Saying a grace or blessing before a meal is a way of saying "thank you." You might wish to discuss with your child who or what they think should be thanked before eating. Do we thank God or Spirit for the gifts that we are given? Do we thank the plants or animals for being our food? Does it matter who we are thanking? Why is it important to be grateful?

Bear in mind that different members of your family may well have different opinions on this subject, and that it isn't necessary for everyone to agree in order to share in share saying grace together.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Ritual

Your family may or may not have a ritual of saying grace together before meals. If this ritual is new to you, you might like to use the grace which appears on the table tent that your child brought home. Try holding hands and taking a deep breath together before saying the words. Or, you might like to sing a blessing rather than just saying it. Here is one such blessing, sung to the tune of the Tallis Canon, "[Oh We Give Thanks](#)" (MP3 file)

Oh, we give thanks for fruit and grain,
For earth and air and sun and rain,
For those with feathers, fur or feet
Who make it so that we may eat.

A Family Adventure

One way of showing gratitude for the food that we have is to share with those who do not have enough to eat. As a family you could go through your pantry and cupboards to cull non-perishable items which you can donate to a local food bank, or go on a family shopping expedition to buy food to donate. You may also be able to volunteer your time with a food bank and help to sort and/or distribute food.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Many Unitarian Universalist families practice saying grace as a spiritual practice at home. There are many resources for graces online. Here are a few books you might also consider:

[*Rejoice Together: Readings for Family, Individual and Small-Group Worship*](#), 2nd edition edited by Helen R. Pickett (Boston: Skinner House, 2005)

Earth Prayers From around the World: 365 Prayers, Poems, and Invocations for Honoring the Earth by Elizabeth Roberts (HarperOne, 1991)

Available from the [UUA online bookstore](#) are *Gift of Faith* by Jeanne Nieuwejaar (Boston: Skinner House, 2002) and the Unitarian Universalist Association pamphlet, *Family Prayers* by Irene Prager.

Three more books offering reflections about and suggestions for rituals in family homes are *The Intentional Family: Rituals to Strengthen Family Ties* by William J. Doherty (Perseus Books, 1997); *Putting Family First: Successful Strategies for Reclaiming Family Life in a Hurry-Up World* by William J. Doherty and Barbara Carlson (Holt Paperbacks, 2002); and *The Book of New Family Traditions* by Meg Cox, illustrated by Sarah McMenemy (Running Press, 2003).

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: FAMILY TIME (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Star stickers

Preparation for Activity

- Post a sheet of newsprint and draw one line down the middle, to make two columns. Label one column "Family Home" and the other "Faith Home."
- Be ready to post additional sheets of newsprint, as needed.

Description of Activity

This activity will deepen children's understanding of the terms "home," "family home," and "faith home" as you guide them to discern which activities we share with others in our family homes, in our faith home, and in both places.

Tell the children that you will begin to name some activities. The children can decide if they do these activities with members of their family home, their faith home, or both. If children need a reminder, mention that their faith home means the congregation or house of worship and includes the community of people they are with right now.

You can start by suggesting that sharing meals together is one activity we share with members of our family home and members of our faith home. Write "eat together" in both columns. Let the group suggest additional activities, or prompt as needed:

- Take a bath
- Play games
- Read a book
- Clean up or do chores

- Do homework
- Worship
- Sing or make music
- Watch a movie

Fill in the chart with the activity in the appropriate column(s). Point out anything that particularly stands out.

Now look at all the activities that are done at the faith home. Read each one aloud. Ask the group which activities they have done together so far. Place a star sticker by those activities.

STORY: THE BEST MEAL

Inspired by a story in Tales for the Seventh Day: A Collection of Sabbath Stories by Nina Jaffe (New York: Scholastic Press, 2000).

Once there was a great chef who was famous throughout the land. She was so good she taught other people how to cook and their food was almost as tasty as hers. Just for fun, she would throw fancy dinner parties once a month. Everyone wanted to be invited to these dinners. For these dinners, she would instruct the student chefs to cook new and extravagant dishes. The dinner guests, in awe of the chef's skills, would spend the dinner savoring each bite. All you would hear would be quiet little "ooohs" and "aaahs."

Because she wanted to always feature new goodies to eat at all her parties, she would travel far and wide all over the land to experience new food. Everywhere she went, the town would honor her. The best cooks would create dishes unique to their region. The great chef tasted them all and requested the recipes of the dishes she liked best. As you can imagine, she ate a lot of food and knew a great deal about how to prepare the best meals.

One evening, while traveling home, the chef stopped at a small country house to ask for directions to a hotel. The family insisted that she spend the night with them. Happily, she was in time for dinner. The mother took a casserole out of the oven. Brother tossed a salad with different vegetables. Sister sliced the bread.

"Let me help," said the chef, so she set the table for the four of them.

When everyone was seated at the table, the family held hands. The chef felt the young sister's hand slip into hers and the chef, in turn, reached out for the brother's hand.

The mother said, "To have food upon the table" and the children replied "Is a blessing!"

The mother said, "The sunset and the possibility of another sunrise tomorrow..."

"Is a blessing!" the children replied.

"The love of family, the warmth of friendship, and the grace of the Spirit..."

"Is a blessing!" the children and chef replied together. Then they laughed, happy that the chef had joined in their grace.

They ate and during the meal everyone told stories about their day. The chef could not believe how delicious the food was. She didn't want dinner to end. All things must end, however, and off to bed the children went.

"May I have the recipes?" the chef asked the mother, who was flattered that the chef had so enjoyed their simple meal.

In the morning, the chef rode on towards home. When she got home, she went straight to the kitchen, gave the young chefs the recipes, and told them to start preparation for a dinner party tomorrow night.

Tomorrow came, the guests arrived, and the casserole, salad, and bread were served. The chef took a bite and chewed. Something was wrong. Something was missing. This was not like the meal she had at the farmhouse. She ordered the students to explain what they had done differently, but they promised they had only followed the recipes. So she sent someone to go to the farmhouse to bring the mother to her house. The mother came and the chef asked her what missing ingredient had she left out of the recipe.

"What's missing cannot fit into a recipe," she replied. "Did you and your guests make the meal together? Did you hold fast to each other while giving thanks? Did you share your stories during the meal?"

"No," the chef replied. None of that had happened. Then the chef realized that sharing a meal together – what we call "breaking bread together" – was about more than just eating good food. It was about working together, sharing lives, and sharing laughs. It was about being thankful for the food not because it was fancy or the best, but because being together to enjoy the food would nourish you, your family, and your friends.

After that, the chef decided to give small, intimate dinner parties. She and her guests would work together with the student chefs and they would all sit together, give thanks, and enjoy the very best of meals.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: SNACK RECIPES

If you have time, you may like to extend Activity 4: Breaking Bread Together by engaging the children in preparing a more complicated snack together, by inviting another group to break bread with the children, or both.

One easy snack recipe is to make your own snack mix. Purchase three to five bags of differently sized, shaped and flavored crackers. Children generally like cheese flavored crackers. You might include cheesy fish-shaped crackers, pretzel sticks, and small, round toasted crackers. Cereal that is not too sweet could be another fun addition. You might have children with nut allergies, so don't include nuts. You could also include raisins, dried peaches or other dried fruit.

You might consider a fruit salad, combining purple and green grapes, canned tangerine sections, and pieces of apples and pears. You would need to cut the apple and pear pieces before the meeting.

Most children also like pasta, which is tasty and fun. If you have time to cook before the class, a different and silly snack might include differently shapes and colors of pasta, without sauce. Try multicolored rotini, wheat linguini, spaghetti, and spinach shells.

Make sure children wash their hands or use an antibacterial cleanser both before combining ingredients and before eating.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: FOUR GRACES

Grace #1

For each new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food, for love and friends,
For everything your goodness sends,
Thank you!

adapted from a grace of Ralph Waldo Emerson by Reverend Phil Lund. Sung to the tune of "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow"

Grace #2

Loving spirit be our guest.
Dine with us, share our bread
That our table might be blessed
And our souls be fed.

by Reverend Gary Kowalski, may be sung to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb"

Grace #3

Oh, the Earth is good to me,
and so I thank the Earth
for giving me the things I need,
the sun, the rain and the apple seed
the earth is good to me.

adapted by Pat Kahn from a Girl Scout grace, from a song, "Johnny Appleseed," by Kim Gannon and Walter Kent

Grace #4

We lift our hearts in thanks today for all the gifts of life.
by Percival Chubb

FIND OUT MORE

Graces and Blessings

There are many resources for graces and blessings online, and here are two books to peruse:

[*Rejoice Together: Prayers, Meditations and Other Readings for Family, Individual and Small-Group Worship*](#), 2nd edition edited by Helen R. Pickett (Boston: Skinner House, 2005)

Earth Prayers From around the World: 365 Prayers, Poems, and Invocations for Honoring the Earth by Elizabeth Roberts (HarperOne, 1991)

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Food Recovery Agencies

Go online to learn about [food recovery agencies](#) and how they work.

SESSION 12: JOHN MURRAY

INTRODUCTION

*What is there more kindly than the feeling
between host and guest?*

-- Aeschylus

Hospitality is the session's focus, with 19th-century Universalist minister John Murray the topic of the central story. Murray's life might have been quite different, had he not been welcomed by Thomas Potter. The story becomes a vehicle for examining the role and practice of hospitality in our family and faith communities.

Hospitality played a particularly central role in Universalism, which has a faith tradition of universal love. For present day Unitarian Universalists, the challenge to hold in community people from diverse backgrounds with many different theologies asks each of us to practice intentional, thoughtful hospitality in our congregations.

This session talks about being hospitable and being welcoming interchangeably. If your congregation is an official Welcoming Congregation, you might like to introduce this aspect of being welcoming to the children in the group.

There are many versions of John Murray's story. The version presented here invites the children to participate in the telling and have a little fun.

It is important for young children to hear the stories of our faith tradition. Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists have a history full of brave individuals who lived according to values and principles they held dear. Hospitality is one of those values, and practicing it is not always easy.

When talking about being hospitable to strangers with young children, keep their safety in mind. Throughout the session and explicitly in Activity 4: Hospitality Hat, we encourage children to practice being welcoming. As you lead, integrate the message that children should be hospitable to strangers only under the supervision of a trusted adult, even at their faith home.

Activity 3: Ways to Welcome calls for an adult from your congregation to come and talk to the group. When your visitor arrives, model hospitality and invite the children to assist you. Be prepared. Have a place for visitors to sit. Greet them warmly, introduce them, and offer them a drink or a snack. After they speak with the group, thank them, and invite them back. If visitors will remain through the Closing, invite them to place a name stone on the labyrinth when they arrive so they can fully participate in the closing ritual.

For Activity 4: Making Windsocks, each child will need one empty, cylindrical cardboard container. Empty boxes of oatmeal or empty tubes of potato chips will work well, as will cardboard rolls from paper towels. Check with local schools, restaurants, and the congregation for containers at least a couple of weeks ahead.

GOALS

This session will:

- Define hospitality and some actions that convey it
- Demonstrate the value of being hospitable to the stranger in our faith home
- Guide participants to make a connection between being hospitable in their family homes and being hospitable in your faith home
- Provide opportunities to practice safe hospitality

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Deepen their sense of Unitarian Universalist identity by learning a popular hymn
- Learn the story of one of our Universalist ancestors
- Observe one way their faith home practices hospitality
- Practice acting hospitable and recognizing hospitality in different situations
- Create a windsock to help them remember John Murray
- Optional: Learn a way to be hospitable to those who speak a language other than English

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: "Come, Come, Whoever You Are"	5
Activity 2: Story — John Murray and the Winds of Change	10
Activity 3: Ways to Welcome	10
Activity 4: Hospitality Hat	10
Activity 5: Making Windsocks	15
Faith In Action: Postcards for Visiting	25

Families — Short-term

Faith In Action: Hospitality at a Unitarian Universalist Camp — Short-term	10
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Hand in Hand	10
Alternate Activity 2: Many Ways to Say "Hello"	5

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

The words "radical hospitality" are sometimes heard in our congregations. What does radical hospitality mean to you?

Every major religion and life philosophy asks its followers to be hospitable to the stranger. Some people use hospitality as a spiritual practice. This can be practiced in different ways, from speaking to strangers we pass on the street to providing a foster home for stray animals.

Can you think of a time when you were a stranger and you were welcomed with open arms? What did that feel like? Could you use that experience and your memories of being accepted to become more hospitable in your everyday life? What opportunities for hospitality can you find in your interactions with the children in Creating Home today?

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- On top of the labyrinth, place the basket of stones.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. Be aware of the possibility of guests in your class. Have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.

Light the chalice and recite the following affirmation:

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

Say, in your own words:

This labyrinth reminds us that we are taking a journey together. Every session is another portion of that journey. Each time we meet, everyone will be asked to place their stone within the labyrinth. Each stone is a symbol of us as fellow members of this group. When you place your stone, please say your name and share any joys or concerns you have had since we last met. Joys are the things that make you feel happy and concerns are worries. Sharing our joys and concerns with one another is a tradition in our faith community.

Close the joys and concerns by affirming that it is very good to be together. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: SINGING "COME, COME WHOEVER YOU ARE" (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- One copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 188 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Come, Come Whoever You Are," a very short hymn that is easy to sing a cappella and can be sung as a round.
- If you wish, invite someone in advance to attend this session to help you teach and lead the song. Possible volunteers might include a choir director, accompanist, or member, or other adults or youth in your congregation who belong to singing groups, play a musical instrument, or have a background in music.

Description of Activity

Learning this popular hymn will introduce the hospitality theme of the session and help deepen children's sense of Unitarian Universalist identity. Gather the group. Sing for them Hymn 188 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, "Come, Come, Whoever You Are."

Ask if any of the children have heard the song before. In your own words, say:

This song is called "Come, Come, Whoever You Are." It is a popular Unitarian Universalist hymn. A hymn is a special kind of song. It might have words that say "thank you" or words that offer praise to the world or give a blessing. Faith homes like our Unitarian Universalist congregation, or a temple, or a church, are places where people often sing hymns.

Tell the children that you will teach them this hymn so the next time they hear it in their congregation, they can sing along.

Teach the hymn yourself, or ask the volunteer you have invited to teach it, by singing each line and asking the children to repeat the line after you. Then put the lines together. Sing the song several times. As "Come, Come Whoever You Are" is a fairly upbeat song, consider inviting the children to stand and join hands, swinging them upward and outward to the beat.

In this age group, children may not fully understand the meaning of all this hymn's words and phrases. Explain that the title phrase, "Come, come, whoever you are" means that we, as Unitarian Universalists, joyfully welcome every different kind of person.

This hymn is frequently sung as a round. If you feel your group might enjoy trying to sing it that way, form two groups. Have everyone sing it through once, then have one group start singing and bring the second group in after the first line. Let both groups sing the hymn three times.

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — JOHN MURRAY AND THE WINDS OF CHANGE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of story, "[John Murray and the Winds of Change](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: "[John Murray and the Winds of Change](#)" coloring sheet, and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Download, and print out story, "John Murray and the Winds of Change." Review the story and prepare to tell, rather than read it, to the group, and to lead the interactive parts of the story.
- Use the resources in "Leader Resources" to learn more about John Murray.
- Optional: If a visitor will be coming later in this session to talk about your congregation's way of welcoming visitors (Activity 3: Ways to Welcome), leave two or three minutes after you have finished the story, "John Murray and the Winds of Change," to help the children generate a few questions for the guest. Encourage the children to ask why the congregation practices hospitality, as well as how.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

An interactive story using wind imagery introduces one of our Universalist ancestors, John Murray. Gather the children in a circle. Before you present the story, tell the class that the wind plays an important part in it. Ask the children if they can blow gently like the wind. Practice blowing together. Invite them to gently blow whenever you say the word "wind" in the story.

You may say:

You can blow every time you hear the word "wind." But, it is a little bit tricky. You will notice that some of the time this story talks about an actual wind that blows. And sometimes it talks about the image of the wind. It might talk about the wind to give an idea of something else that is

like the wind. When you hear me say "the winds of change," you can still blow, but the story isn't talking about real wind. It's talking about when changes come like the wind. You can feel them, but you cannot see them or stop them.

You may like to ask children if they have ever felt "the winds of change." An example might be when a child enters a new school classroom for the first time. He/she might feel excited, nervous, or afraid, but cannot exactly see the change happen, nor control it. Another example might be the birth of a sibling, or changing from one best friend to a new best friend.

Tell the story, encouraging children to blow when you say the word "wind." At the conclusion, engage the children in discussion around the following questions:

- Has your family ever received guests in your home, as Thomas Potter received John Murray?
- Did you or your family do anything special to make the guest feel welcome? Did you serve food and drinks? Introduce yourselves? Show a guest your artwork or toys? Ask questions to be friendly and start a conversation?
- In what way did Thomas Potter show hospitality to John Murray? Did he offer food and drinks? Introduce himself? Engage him in a conversation? Show John Murray something that was special to him?
- What if Thomas Potter had not done any of those things? What might have happened? If he only just gave John Murray some food, but wasn't friendly, do you think John Murray would have been willing to stay and become the minister Thomas Potter was wishing for?

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "John Murray and the Winds of Change" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 3: WAYS TO WELCOME (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Identify the committee that takes responsibility for your congregation's hospitality to visitors who come to a worship service. Invite a member to come talk with the group for five to ten minutes about the congregation's practice of hospitality. If there is no committee, invite

someone who has served as a greeter, an usher, or a coffee hour host. Ask the visitor to wear or bring any nametag or other item that distinguishes their special role in providing hospitality.

- Be ready to model — and guide the children how to show — hospitality to the visitor. You may wish to offer the visitor a name stone to place on the labyrinth, a name tag, a drink of water or a snack, and/or introduction by name to each of the children and leaders in the room.
- Optional: Before your guest arrives, give the children an opportunity to generate some questions for the guest. Encourage the children to ask why the congregation practices hospitality, as well as how.

Description of Activity

From one of your congregation's "hosts," the children will hear about at least one way your faith home practices hospitality, observe that this practice is important to the congregation, and explore potential ways they, themselves, can be hospitable.

Being hospitable to visitors is a large part of our Universalist history and present Unitarian Universalist faith. Invite them to spend five minutes with the class comparing hospitality in the congregation to hospitality at home. If they have special nametags or something that distinguishes their role, ask them to wear or bring it.

When your guest for Activity 3: Ways to Welcome arrives, welcome him/her warmly and introduce the guest to the children. Engage members of the group in helping with the hospitality practices you have chosen, such as offering the guest a chair, a name stone to place on the labyrinth, or a snack or drink. Then invite the guest to tell the children about his/her role in practicing hospitality in your faith home.

If your visitor does not present a role children can play in faith home hospitality, do so in a discussion or "question and answer period" after the visitor's talk. You may say, in your own words:

Just as children can offer hospitality as members of their family homes, they can take a role in offering hospitality as members of their faith home.

Explore with your visitor what some of these roles might be. They may include welcoming visitors as the children welcomed today's guest in Creating Home, serving as greeters with their families before worship or at coffee hour, or simply wearing name tags so new people can see their names. Invite your guest to demonstrate ways to be friendly, such as smiling, making eye contact, and introducing oneself.

You may like to lead the children in discussing ways they practice hospitality toward other children. You can ask:

Is hospitality the same for children as for adults? Are there special ways children can be hospitable to new children, here in our faith home, without an adult's help?

To stimulate discussion, you can ask the children if any of them have ever:

- Invited someone new to sit next to you?
- Invited someone new to join you and your friends in a game or conversation?
- Shared art materials with a child who is new?
- Smiled in a friendly way at someone who is new and said "hi?"
- Shown a new child where to find a place to hang up his/her coat, or where the bathroom is?

You may also like to ask the group:

Pretend that you have just come into our meeting space for the first time. Pretend you do not know any of the other children in Creating Home. How would you like another child to be hospitable to you? What would make you feel welcomed and comfortable here?

When it is time to move on to the next activity, you may like to invite your guest to stay and take part.

Engage the children in thanking your guest for coming to Creating Home.

ACTIVITY 4: HOSPITALITY HAT (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A hat for children to share
- A piece of blank paper, a marker, and tape or a safety pin
- Optional: Scissors

Preparation for Activity

- When you choose the hat that will be associated with hospitable behavior in this activity, be conscious of stereotypes. A white or black hat could perpetuate racial stereotypes; a pink or blue hat could lead to children associating hospitality choices with gender. In the same way, you might want to stay away from sports caps, or any hat strongly associated with an ethnic group. A "silly" hat, such as a jester's hat, may work the best.

- Write the word "hospitality" on a piece of blank paper and affix the paper to the hat you have brought to be the "Hospitality Hat."
- If you would rather not have children share a hat, cut the piece of blank paper into a heart shape, and write the word "hospitality" on it. Use the safety pin or tape to affix the "Hospitality Heart" to the clothing of each child who takes a turn at role-playing hospitality.

Description of Activity

Children will practice being hospitable in different situations and work together to define "hospitable" behavior.

For this game, you will use a hat labeled with the word "hospitable." Explain that volunteers from the group will act out a few different situations, or scenarios. Each time, one child will be the host and another child will be the guest. The host will try to be hospitable to the guest. When the actors are done, the group will decide whether the host was hospitable and has earned the Hospitality Hat.

Tell the children that before you begin the role-playing, you want to make sure everyone has a good idea of what it means to be "hospitable." You can ask for some suggestions of hospitable behavior. Affirm correct ones. Then say:

In the story about John Murray, he came to Thomas Potter when the ship got lost and the people on board were in trouble. John Murray was an unexpected guest, a visitor who wasn't invited. What did Thomas Potter do that was hospitable to John Murray?

Guide the group to remember that Thomas Potter greeted John Murray, gave him food for everyone on the ship, invited John to come back for dinner that night, and showed John something he loved very much, the chapel.

You may decide to act out the first scenario with your co-leader or one of the children acting the role of the guest. Put on the "Hospitality Hat," and explain the scenario:

- A new person comes to a congregational potluck dinner.

If you are modeling the role of host, introduce yourself (with your real or a made-up name) to the guest, ask the guest his/her name, and say "Welcome!" Extend hospitality further, with statements such as:

- Do you want to make a name tag for yourself? I can show you where the markers are.

- Please let me introduce you to some more people here, so you will feel more comfortable.
- Oh, please don't worry that you have not brought a dish. Everyone is welcome and there is plenty of food to share.
- Do you prefer coffee, tea, juice, or water? We have all of them!
- There is a coat room over there, if you want to hang up your coat.
- I hope you enjoy all the yummy food.

If you are modeling the host role, ask the children for more suggestions of what to say in your scenario. If a child is the host and seems to need some prompting, ask the group for suggestions.

End the scenario by thanking the role-players. Then ask the group, "Did the host succeed in being hospitable?"

You may use these suggestions for scenarios. Use your own ideas, as well, especially ones specific to your congregation or community.

- A new student is assigned to your class at school.
- A new child comes to Creating Home.
- You are at home playing a game with your family and a cousin arrives for a visit. (Use this scenario to talk about being safe and never talking to strangers unless you have family or trusted adults right beside you to tell you it is okay.)
- Someone you do not know sits next to your family in a worship service.
- A new child moves into your neighborhood and comes to your house when your family is just about to eat dinner together.

In order to give a "host" or "guest" role to every child who wants one, you may need to repeat or slightly modify a scenario. After each scenario has been enacted, involve all of the children in affirming the "hospitable behavior" of the host and offering suggestions for more hospitality. If a child seems to need help with what to say as the host or as the guest, engage the observing children in generating suggestions.

This exercise may give you the opportunity to talk about empathy. You might ask them how they would feel if someone said to them what is being said during the exercise. Or, choose prime moments to stop the role-playing and ask, "How do you think this person feels right now?"

It is easier for children to understand hospitality as something we do to be polite. It is not so easy for young children to understand that true hospitality is an acknowledgment of our connections to and dependence upon each other.

Including All Participants

If the children in the group are too young for role-playing, you can use a variation in which each child holds two cards, one that says "yes" and one that says "no." You and your co-leader can act out the scenarios in different ways. Try various scenarios with the host being warm and welcoming, and then with the host acting rude, abrupt, and disinterested. After each very short scenario, ask the group whether the host was "hospitable" and instruct them to vote "yes" or "no" using their "hospitality cards." After each scenario and vote, either ask the children or say yourself how the host's behavior was, or was not, hospitable.

ACTIVITY 5: MAKING WINDSOCKS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Cardboard cylinders or empty containers for all participants
- Construction paper, crayons or markers, glue or tape, strong string, and crepe paper ribbon

Preparation for Activity

- Begin a few weeks ahead of the session collecting empty, cylindrical cardboard containers and cardboard rolls from paper towels. You will need one for each child. Empty boxes of oatmeal or empty cardboard tubes of potato chips will work well. Cut off the tops and bottoms from cylinders that have them.

Description of Activity

Children will create a windsock to help them remember John Murray. He would not have preached at Thomas Potter's church, and may not have become one of our country's first Universalist ministers, if the wind had been blowing the day he was to leave on the *Hand In Hand*.

Tell children they will each make a windsock to help them remember the story and to honor the wind.

Give each child:

- A cardboard cylinder
- Construction paper to cover the cylinder
- Crayons and markers to decorate the paper
- Crepe paper ribbon

- A piece of strong string

Tell children they may begin decorating their paper with a picture of their favorite part from the John Murray story. You may suggest the ship on which he came from England (the *Hand In Hand*), or the ship's crew receiving the food from Tom.

Allow five minutes for drawing. Visit each child individually. You may need to help children cut the paper to fit around their cylinders. It will be easier for them to decorate the paper before gluing. However, try to cut each child's construction paper to the correct size quickly, to prevent children investing time in a drawing that won't fully show when wrapped around the cardboard cylinder.

Glue the paper to the container. Then glue some strips of crepe paper to the bottom. Punch four holes in the top of the container, lace a string knotted at one end through each hole and tie the four ends together. Children can take them home and place them outside and watch the wind blowing their windsock all around.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, bold marker, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the words "hospitality," and "welcome," and "hymn" with bold marker on index cards or post-its.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice. Invite the children to take their stones from the labyrinth, place them in the basket, and return to the circle.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The words for our World Wall today are "hospitality," "welcome," and "hymn."

Show the group the index cards or post-its on which you have written "hospitality," "welcome," and "hymn." You may ask the children if they remember what each of these words means. You could ask them to tell you when they showed hospitality today, who welcomed John Murray, or what kind of song is a hymn. Affirm the correct definitions. Here are some you can use:

- Hospitality: a polite and generous receiving of guests
- Welcome: to receive or accept a person or persons gladly
- Hymn: a song of praise, joy, or thanksgiving, often addressed to God or a deity

Post the words on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite the children to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,
When our heart is in a holy place.
We are blessed with love and amazing grace.
When our heart is in a holy place.

Say in your own words:

Our faith home can be a welcoming place. So can our meeting space where we gather. When we make room for others and invite them to become part of our community, we are showing hospitality, and living our Unitarian Universalist values of acceptance and love. If we all lived our lives with acceptance and love, think of what a world it would be.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind the children to give the handout to their parents, and dismiss the group.

FAITH IN ACTION: POSTCARDS FOR VISITING FAMILIES — SHORT-TERM (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Blank postcards, at least one for each participant
- Markers or crayons

Preparation for Activity

- If you like, arrange to include your guest from Activity 3: Ways to Welcome as a co-leader of this activity. Working with the adult they have already met as a practitioner of your congregation's hospitality will reinforce children's understanding of the importance of hospitality at your faith home and in Unitarian Universalism.

Description of Activity

Children will learn about and help to practice faith home hospitality by making materials that will be used to welcome newcomers. Most congregations acknowledge and thank those who visit for worship services, religious education programs, and other events. You can help by preparing postcards to be sent to people who have visited.

Explain – or have your guest from Activity 3, Ways to Welcome, explain – what the children will make, how the postcards will be used, and why your faith home uses this hospitality practice.

Invite the children to each decorate the blank side of a postcard. Ideas for decorating might include a picture of the Creating Home group doing something together, or a worship scene including happy, smiling faces. Tell the children that they should leave the other side blank, so one of the adults in the congregation can write a personal welcoming message to the person or family who visited your congregation.

This activity gives you an opportunity to explain how a postcard works: a picture on one side, and greetings on the other side alongside the address and a postage stamp.

FAITH IN ACTION: HOSPITALITY AT A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CAMP — SHORT-TERM (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Invite a visitor from your congregation to tell the group about a gathering they attended

at a Unitarian Universalist camp or conference center.

- Optional: Obtain flyers, brochures, and/or photographs that represent the activities at a Unitarian Universalist camp or conference center.
- Optional: Be ready with a computer and internet access to show participants images of one or more Unitarian Universalist camp or conference center gatherings.

Description of Activity

Children will observe one context in which Unitarian Universalists practice hospitality by learning about one or more Unitarian Universalist camps and conference centers, of which there are dozens in the U.S. At these sites, young people and families can attend conferences and retreats where they may meet Unitarian Universalists from all over the U.S. or abroad and possibly people of other faiths. Some camps offer interfaith programs for young people. Whatever the event, attendees are sure to meet strangers in a safe place and have opportunities to practice both giving and receiving Unitarian Universalist hospitality.

The site where Thomas Potter built his chapel is now the [Unitarian Universalist Camp and Conference Center](#) in Murray Grove, New Jersey. Show the website of the Murray Grove center to the group and explain the kinds of activities and events that happen there.

If any individuals in your congregation, especially young people, have visited one of the Unitarian Universalist camps, invite them to come and tell the group about the experience of meeting new people and being welcoming. Invite your visitor(s) to bring photographs from their time at the camp. You can also download photographs from websites, or set up a computer with an internet connection and explore some Unitarian Universalist camps and conference centers' websites with the children. Use flyers and brochures that your congregation already has or request materials from the camp or conference center in your region, in advance.

As you look at photographs together, invite the children to point out examples of hospitality "in action" that they can observe. After a visitor shares about his/her time at a Unitarian Universalist gathering, call attention to specific instances of hospitality. Remind the children about the hospitality John Murray received, and how important it turned out to be in bringing his life into a new direction. Perhaps a trip to a Unitarian Universalist camp may blow winds of hospitality toward children in the group. Ask:

Who knows which way the winds will blow? If you go to a UU camp or conference center, you might make a new friend.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Teaching young children about hospitality is not easy. It asks them to put the needs of others before their own. Were there moments when you think this message was conveyed more strongly than others?

How successful was the role-playing? If it went well, you could use it as a tool for future sessions.

If you had visitors in the session, did that go well? Did you feel that they had prepared adequately? If not, how could you have better helped them prepare? Was the group hospitable to them? Did the visitors appear to enjoy the visit enough to come again?

TAKING IT HOME

What is there more kindly than the feeling between host and guest? – Aeschylus

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Today's session focused on the story of John Murray, Universalist minister. A story about John Murray's arrival in the United States from England was used to start a discussion on hospitality. We defined hospitality and talked about how we practice it at our family home and our faith home. We also discussed being safe and not talking to strangers without a trusted adult being at hand.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

If you and your child witness others being hospitable, use the opportunity to point out in what way they were welcoming. If you use the words "hospitable" and "welcoming," you will help your child learn the behaviors that reflect those values. Of course, you can also watch for opportunities to be hospitable to strangers. Instead of driving with your child to some place in your neighborhood, walk, without headphones or distractions. Greet everyone you pass. What reactions do you get? How does it make you feel? Talk about the experience with your child when you get home.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Game

The very old children's singing game, "Oats, Peas, Beans and Barley Grow," contains the lines "Open the ring and choose one in/ While we all gaily dance and sing." Dancing and singing in celebration of bringing people into the circle is a lovely representation of the hospitable spirit. Oh, and this game is more fun with a larger group than you may have in your family, so be

hospitable and invite friends and neighbors to play!
Here's how you do it:

All join hands in a circle, with the "Farmer" at the center.

Verse 1 (Sing while walking counterclockwise.)

Oats, peas, beans and barley grow,

Oats, peas, beans and barley grow,

Nor you, nor I, nor anyone knows,

How oats, peas, beans and barley grow.

Verse 2 (All face center, drop hands, and imitate the sowing of the seed as the farmer in the center does it. On the second line, stand at ease as they do (usually with arms folded). In unison, they stamp their feet and clap their hands and (shading eyes) turn around and view the land)

First the farmer sows the seed,

Then they stand and take their ease.

Stomps their foot and claps their hands

And turns around to view the land.

Verse 3 (As the third verse is sung, the farmer chooses a partner who joins them in the center.)

Looking for a partner,

Looking for a partner,

Open the ring and choose one in

While we all gaily dance and sing.

Repeat all the verses. On the third verse, now there are two farmers; each chooses someone to join the center. Each time the first verse is sung, those in the center move clockwise. Keep going until everyone ends up in the center. That's how it is with hospitality – we want to welcome the whole group in!

A Family Adventure

Your family can practice hospitality by serving as greeters for an upcoming worship service at our congregation, or by helping to prepare and/or serve coffee and snacks after the service. You might wish to make cookies to share with your faith home, or even to volunteer for a regular monthly slot as greeters or hospitality providers.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Hospitality is practiced by some people as a spiritual practice. If you would like to know more about this, you might read *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love*, by Lonni Collins Pratt and Daniel Homan, Paraclete Press. It is available from the [UUA bookstore](#), as are

other books and pamphlets about the practice of hospitality.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: HAND IN HAND (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large roll of paper, such as butcher paper or brown mailing wrap
- Scissors and masking tape
- Washable paint in different colors
- Pie tins, one to hold each different color of paint

Preparation for Activity

- Identify a place in your meeting space where you can display the welcome sign, and cut the length of paper you need.
- Tape the length of paper to the floor or a long table where children can reach it.
- Lightly trace the word "Welcome!" onto the paper. Make the letters large enough and spread them apart so children's handprints on the letters will clearly spell the word.
- Pour about one inch of paint into each pie tin.

Description of Activity

In this activity, the children will produce their own sign of welcome for visitors and newcomers.

Say, in your own words:

The name of the ship that brought John Murray to America was the "Hand in Hand." That was a good name for the ship, because our hands can help us show hospitality.

Ask if children can think of ways we use our hands to show hospitality. Prompt for answers such as:

- We shake hands when we meet people.
- We wave "hello" and "goodbye."
- We hold hands to comfort each other and show friendship.

Say:

Let's create a poster that extends the hand of friendship to everyone entering our meeting space. Let's all use our hands to make the word "Welcome."

Let the children press their hands into the pie plates of washable paint, and then make handprints on the paper. Guide them to follow your tracing to spell out "Welcome!"

Ask the children to wash their hands.

Let the sign dry. Before the group meets again, hang it in your meeting space or outside, above the door.

In Session 14: Coming Home, Activity 3 invites the children to create homecoming signs to display in their family homes. The activity description will guide you to use the "Welcome!" sign made by the entire group to connect the two activities.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: MANY WAYS TO SAY "HELLO" (5 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Find out the correct ways to pronounce the non-English greetings that are not already familiar to you. If you like, learn some more.

Description of Activity

By learning how to say "hello" in a few different languages, children acquire a way to be hospitable to those who speak a language other than English.

Gather the children in a circle. Tell them:

John Murray immigrated to this country from England. He spoke English in England, so when he came to the United States he already knew how to understand and speak to people here though he was unable to speak to or understand Native Americans whose tribes spoke different languages. Most of our families, unless we are Native American, came from another country.

You may wish to ask if anyone in the group recently came to live in the United States from a country where a language other than English is spoken or if they know someone who did? Maybe children in the group speak another language at home, or know other children who do. Allow some responses; gently correct any misinformation that is presented.

Ask if anyone knows how to say "hello" in another language. If a child offers an example that you are confident is accurate, you may wish to teach it to the entire group.

Here are some ways to say "hello" in different languages that you can teach the group. Allow the children to practice each "hello" after you teach it.

- "hola" or "buenos dias" — Spanish
- "jambo" — Swahili
- "buon giorno" or "ciao" — Italian
- "konnichiwa" — Japanese
- "shalom" — Hebrew
- "al salaam a'alaykum" — Arabic

Invite the children to pass a multilingual "hello" around the group as they sit in a circle. Explain that each child will offer one of the non-English greetings to the person sitting on their right. The second child responds in kind, then turns to the child on their right and says "hello" in a different language. Start the game yourself by greeting the child sitting to your right, and end when the greeting comes back around to you.

STORY: JOHN MURRAY AND THE WINDS OF CHANGE

You never know what the wind will blow in or which way the wind blows. The wind can change directions and maybe change your life. It happened to John Murray. As a young man, John Murray had excellent fortune blow his way. He had a fine education, a steady job, a loving wife, and a young son. Life was good. Then, suddenly, everything changed. John Murray's wife and their son became sick and died. John lost his job, lost all his money, and was put in jail because he could not pay his bills.

John was a very religious man, a Universalist, who had even preached about a loving God. Now, he was not so sure what he believed. He felt his life was over. Friends urged him to go someplace where he could start again.

He sailed for America on a ship named the Hand In Hand. The wind blew the ship toward their destination, New York. But then, fog rolled in and the ship ran aground in New Jersey instead. John and a few others volunteered to leave the ship, go on land, and get directions and supplies.

As he was walking ashore, John saw a farmhouse with a small chapel or church beside it. It belonged to Thomas Potter. Thomas Potter greeted John, gave him food for everyone on the ship, and invited John to come back and have dinner with him that night.

When John came back, Thomas Potter showed him the chapel. Thomas Potter said that he believed in a loving God who wanted to accept all people into heaven. John said that he believed the same thing. Thomas Potter told John that he had built the chapel and was waiting for God to send him a minister. "You, John, are that minister. I have waited for you a long time".

John did not want to hear this. He was not a preacher anymore and he was determined to never preach again. Yet, Thomas Potter seemed confident that John was the Universalist preacher he waited for and he asked John to preach on Sunday. "I can't preach on Sunday," said John, "because as soon as the wind changes, my boat will set sail and I must be on it."

"If the boat has not sailed by Sunday, will you preach?" asked Thomas Potter.

"If I am still here on Sunday, I will preach," said John Murray.

Now, what do you think happened? Did the wind blow? Did the Hand In Hand sail away, taking John Murray with it?

No wind blew.

No ship sailed.

John Murray preached on Sunday morning, September 30, 1770, in the chapel Thomas Potter built for him many years before.

The Universalist message of the power of love was good news to many who heard. It was good news for John. The winds of change blew yet again for John Murray. He now wanted to preach more than anything and he did, for many years, and helped found Universalism in America. He is one of the ancestors of our faith home and we, as Unitarian Universalists, owe a special thanks to Thomas Potter. It was his hospitality that brought John Murray back to the pulpit. We also owe a special thanks to the wind that blew him in and would not blow him out.

FIND OUT MORE

Online at UUA.org and available from the UUA Bookstore, find the [UUA pamphlet, Religious Hospitality](#) by Peter Morales. Also online, learn about Unitarian Universalist [camps and conference centers](#).

The practice of hospitality in a Christian monastic context is the subject of *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love* by Lonni Collins Pratt and Daniel Homan (Brewster, Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2005).

SESSION 13: OUR WORSHIP HOME

INTRODUCTION

A place will express itself through the human being just as it does through its wild flowers. — Lawrence Durrell

In Session 12, children explored how we make a faith home. This session goes more deeply into that topic, focusing on the realm of worship. Worship is an expression of faith. Our worship together as Unitarian Universalists is a communal expression of faith that plays a very important role in most congregations.

As the quote that opens this session, from 20th-century novelist, poet and travel writer Lawrence Durrell, suggests that for members of a Unitarian Universalist faith home, the place of worship expresses itself through the people who gather there. Each time members gather for worship, it evolves into a new expression of faith based on the people who attend and respond together.

This session offers opportunities for participants to explore some elements common to faith home worship. Children will experiment with artistic and written expression of their own worship experiences. You may decide to incorporate their creations into a congregational worship experience. Most activities can be adapted to your own faith home worship expressions, and all honor the particular stages and places where children are in their lives. Remember that the diversity that brings richness to Unitarian Universalist worship embraces differences in the age as well as the beliefs and experiences of every worshipper. Children are co-creators of our faith homes and the future of our Unitarian Universalist faith. This session introduces a role for them in our worship.

Worship has infinite expressions. In a Unitarian Universalist context, people can share worship anytime, anywhere — not necessarily in a church sanctuary, not necessarily on Sunday morning. Worship can be intergenerational, yet frequently in our congregations children leave a worship service for religious education time. Be prepared for a child in Creating Home to ask why. You might ask your director of religious education or your minister why that is the practice of your congregations.

Mary-Ella Holst says in the Unitarian Universalist pamphlet, *We Dedicate This Child*:

Communities need children. Children remind us of our own vulnerability, our mortal journey, and the role we play in each other's lives.

In Activity 4 of this session, children will learn about the dedication service that takes place in your worship home when a new child arrives. In connection with Creating Home, you may want to explore additional ways your congregation can be open to the wonderful diversity that children can bring to shared worship.

GOALS

This session will:

- Guide participants to recognize the need community worship fills at their faith home
- Help participants translate their faith into communal worship experiences
- Give each participant an opportunity to identify two of his/her unique gifts or talents
- Introduce the rich Unitarian Universalist worship heritage

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- See the gifts others have to offer
- Identify two of their own special gifts
- Learn an abbreviated version of opening words from the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*
- Learn about the child dedication worship service
- Recognize the worship space as shared by those in the faith community

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — The Empty Pot	5
Activity 2: Our Special Gifts Paper Dolls	15
Activity 3: This House	5
Activity 4: Child Dedication Role Play	15
Activity 5: WORSHIP Acronym Picture	10
Activity 6: Faith in Action: Joining in Worship —Short-term	60
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: My Worship Booklet	15
Alternate Activity 2: Designing Seasonal	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

In our lifetimes, we have attended both good worship experiences and bad worship experiences. Close your eyes and take three deep, slow breaths. Focus on a bad worship experience you have had. Now switch your focus to a good worship experience. What made this experience so good?

Remember that worship does not always happen in a church building. Worship can happen in other settings, sometimes at unexpected times. Be creative in your thinking about good worship experiences.

Now open your eyes. Think about ways you can bring the elements of your best worship experiences to the children you are teaching.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- On top of the labyrinth, place the basket of stones.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. Be aware of the possibility of guests or new children. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.

When all are seated, light the chalice. Invite everyone to say with you:

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

You may like to teach the hand motions that accompany these words:

We are Unitarian Universalists,	cup thumb and index fingers of both hands to form a "U"
with minds that think,	place hands on forehead
hearts that love	place hands over heart
and hands that are ready to serve.	hands outstretched

Tell the children that one at a time, they may place their stones on the labyrinth. You may say:

This labyrinth reminds us that we are taking a journey together. Every session is another portion of the journey. Each time we meet,

everyone will be asked to place their stone within the labyrinth. Each stone is a symbol of us as fellow members of this group.

Sharing with each other is a tradition in our faith community. When you place your stone on the labyrinth, please say your name and share any joys or concerns you have had since we last met. Joys are the things that make you feel happy and concerns are worries.

Invite children to come up, one at a time, to place a stone on the labyrinth, say their name, and voice any joys and concerns. You may have to prompt each individual if the group is not used to this opening ritual. When all have placed their name stones on the labyrinth, affirm, "It is very good to be together."

Say, in your own words:

Our meeting time for religious education in Creating Home is worship time we share together. Today we will be talking about worship time and ways we can share in other times of worship here at our faith home.

Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: STORY — THE EMPTY POT (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of story, ["The Empty Pot"](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: ["The Empty Pot" coloring sheet](#), and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Download, and print out story, "The Empty Pot." Review the story and prepare to tell it, rather than read it, to the group.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

The story of Chen will help children see that no matter what they have to offer, their gifts and talents enrich the lives of others when honestly, lovingly shared. Gather the children. Tell the story, "The Empty Pot."

When you have finished, guide the group to identify Chen's gifts. You may ask:

- Who can think of some lovely, special things about Chen that he showed in the story?

Allow responses, which might include a love of gardening, love of family, perseverance, faith in himself, and honesty.

Then ask:

- Why did the Emperor pick Chen for the important job of ruling the land? Do you think Chen turned out to be pretty good at that job? Why?

Help the children discuss why Chen's traits would have fit the Emperor's idea of desirable qualities for a ruler.

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "The Magic Vase" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 2: OUR SPECIAL GIFTS PAPER DOLLS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Paper Doll](#) (included in this document)
- Blank paper or construction paper, any size, for all participants
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Crayons or markers
- Shiny gift wrap paper with plain paper on one side
- Optional: Arts and crafts items such as yarn, buttons, glue, and stickers

Preparation for Activity

- Print out Leader Resource 1, Paper Doll and photocopy onto heavy paper or card stock. You may wish to enlarge the image as you photocopy.
- Cut out the paper doll shape to use as a template.
- Set crayons, markers, and other items for decorating paper dolls at children's work tables.

Description of Activity

In this activity, children will identify two of their own special gifts. Children may have an easier time identifying the gifts of others than their own gifts.

Invite the children to each choose a piece of blank or construction paper to make a paper doll image of themselves. Trace a doll shape on each child's page, using the template you made from Leader Resource 1, Paper Doll

Tell the children they may each cut out their own paper doll and color or decorate their faces, hair, or clothes as they wish. As children begin working, engage them in a discussion to draw out their individual gifts — what they do well.

Try not to give the children words. Ask open questions, such as:

- What do you do best in school?
- What do you do best at recess?
- What do you do best when you are playing with your friends?
- What do you do best at your family home?
- What do you do best at our faith home?

Walk around to talk with each child until each has identified two things they do that are special — two of their gifts. Write one word to describe each gift on the wrapping paper squares. Then, direct children to glue the squares to the hands of the paper dolls that they have decorated to represent themselves.

You may wish to invite the children to place their completed paper dolls on the Creating Home labyrinth to symbolize their willingness to share their gifts as they worship and learn together. You may also like to ask congregational staff or lay leaders where you might display these paper dolls in or near the congregational worship space, as a reminder of the gift that children are to common worship.

ACTIVITY 3: THIS HOUSE (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of Leader Resource 2, [This House](#) (included in this document)
- A copy of the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Review Leader Resource 2, This House so you can comfortably teach the children their part and smoothly read aloud your own.

Description of Activity

Feeling comfortable in worship is greatly helped by knowing the parts of the service and being able participate. For young children, this means learning

some words by rote so they may join in. In this activity, children memorize Reading 433 in *Singing the Living Tradition*:

How rare it is, how lovely, this fellowship of
those who meet together.

The children will practice saying this line as a response to lines from Reading 444.

Gather the children in a circle and teach them their response line by rote, one phrase at a time. Then, invite the children to say the line in response to each sentence you read from Reading 444, as scripted in Leader Resource 2, This House.

You may wish to incorporate this responsive reading into your Opening for future Creating Home sessions. And, look for additional opportunities to have the children say their line again. You may wish to send Leader Resource 2, This House, home for families to use together. You might ask your congregation's worship planners to use this responsive reading, so children can participate in the response.

ACTIVITY 4: CHILD DEDICATION ROLE PLAY (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copy of the liturgy for a child dedication service at your congregation
- Optional: Roses (plastic or real), bowls for water, chalice candles, or other items used in child dedication services at your congregation
- Baby dolls, one for each participant

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain from your director of religious education or your minister one or more versions of a child dedication service held at your congregation.
- Read the child dedication service liturgy.
- Place roses, bowls, chalice candles or other items that your congregation typically uses during child dedication services in an area you will use for role-playing.
- Collect baby dolls, both male and female and of multicultural heritage, and appropriate clothing. Place the baby dolls in the area you will use for role-playing.

Description of Activity

Explain to the children that in Unitarian Universalist congregations, many families like to hold a ceremony for each child. You may tell them, in your own words and as is appropriate for your congregation:

A child dedication ceremony gives the people in the congregation a chance to meet each child, learn the child's name, and promise that they will welcome the child into the faith community and help provide religious education for the child.

Ask if the children have seen a child dedication service at your congregation. Some may know about their own child dedication services, and some who were dedicated as older children may remember theirs. If you are aware of recent child dedications the children might know about, mention the names of the children and their families. Based on the child dedication liturgy you have read and your other experiences, describe what happens during a child dedication service and how these services fit into worship at your congregation.

Invite the children to choose baby dolls and role play that they are a baby's parents, holding a child dedication service. You may wish to assign baby dolls to pairs or triads of children, inviting one or two children to act as the child's parents and another to act as the minister. Talk with the children as they play. Encourage them to think about what kind of child dedication service they would like theirs to be. You can guide them to articulate how they might wish the faith community would welcome and care about the baby, as it grows up to be a child and then an adult.

Ask for some volunteers to role play a child dedication service at the labyrinth. Make sure you leave enough time for all the children who want to do so to role play the service.

ACTIVITY 5: WORSHIP ACRONYM PICTURE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large sheets of construction paper for all participants
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Crayons or color markers

Preparation for Activity

- Write the word "WORSHIP" on newsprint, vertically down the left-hand side of the page, and post. Space out the individual letters generously.

Description of Activity

The word "worship" is easy for beginning readers to sound out and spell. The children will learn to recognize the "worship" while identifying some of their own responses to the word. This is also a good exercise for following directions.

Give each child a large sheet of construction paper, and distribute crayons and/or color markers at worktables. Show the children the word "WORSHIP" that you have posted on newsprint. Invite them to copy the word as you have written it, in capital letters down the left-hand side of the page. Help them sound out and read the word.

Say, in your own words:

When we join together with other people in our faith home to pray, to meditate, to sing together, to share blessings, or to give thanks, that is called "worship." Often, we worship in the sanctuary, but we can worship in other places, too. Sharing time together in Creating Home can be a kind of worship.

Invite the children to draw a picture next to each letter that has something to do with "worship." Provide more detailed directions, one letter at a time. Take your time in suggesting what to draw for each letter. Be ready to return to each letter, as children will decide what to draw, and draw it, at different paces.

Use this letter-by-letter guidance:

- Next to the "W," please draw what worship looks like in our faith home.
- Next to the "O," please draw a picture of others who worship with you in our faith home
- Next to the "R," please draw a picture of a ritual used in worship.
- Next to the "S," please draw something from the worship service that you like.
- Next to the "H," please draw something about a hymn we might sing during worship.
- Next to the "I," please draw the threshold where you enter in the worship service.
- Next to the "P," please draw a person who helps lead the worship service.

You may need to remind participants of the meaning of some words. You may say,

- A "ritual" is something that is done every time there is worship. (Suggest chalice-lighting or another ritual that happens in your congregation.)
- A "hymn" is a song of praise or thanks that can be part of a worship service. (Suggest specific hymns that the children have heard or learned.)
- A "threshold" is the entrance or doorway to a place.

Including All Participants

In many congregations, children this age have very little direct experience of a worship service. Be generous and detailed in your descriptions of what happens in worship. Avoid suggesting there is a "correct" thing to draw for any of the letters.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index cards or post-its, bold marker, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the word "worship" with bold marker on an index card or post-it.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice. Invite the children to take their stones from the labyrinth, place them in the basket, and return to the circle.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The word for our Word Wall today is "worship." One way to think about "worship" is that it can be all the ceremonies, rituals, prayers or other religious practices with which we express our love.

We have learned about how each of us can be an important co-creator of worship time when we are together in Creating Home and when we worship with people of different ages at our faith home. We hope to worship with you again next time.

Show the group the index card or post-it on which you have written "worship." Post it on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite the children to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,
When our heart is in a holy place.
We are blessed with love and amazing grace.
When our heart is in a holy place.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document) handout you have prepared. Remind the children to give the handout to their parents. Thank and dismiss the group.

FAITH IN ACTION: JOINING IN WORSHIP — SHORT-TERM (60 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Choose a specific worship service at your congregation for the Creating Home group to attend together with you.
- Especially if your congregational worship does not normally include children, work with your minister or lay worship leaders to plan how the children will participate. Be sure to talk with the lay leaders responsible for ushering, clean-up and coffee hour about how their duties can incorporate children.
- Optional: Plan this activity for a worship service that will include a child dedication. Make sure the Creating Home children have a chance to sit up front so they can see and fully participate in the service.

Description of Activity

If Creating Home meets during your congregation's worship time, you can structure this project as an on-site "field trip." If congregational worship happens at another time, make arrangements for families to bring the Creating Home children to a specific worship service. Have parents bring the children to your meeting space, or another location outside the worship space, so you

can meet with all the children and take them into the worship service as a group.

If you like, gather the children to help tidy the worship space when the service has finished. Explain that you will be caring for the faith home by cleaning the worship space, which is shared by everyone in the faith community. Show the children how to help straighten chairs, pick up scrap paper, recycle service bulletins, and rearrange the chalice and lighting materials. When the children are finished, ask them how it feels to care for their faith home worship space.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

As a religious education leader, you probably have more contact with the children of your faith home than other adults in your congregation do. Think about yourself and these children as co-creators of this faith home. What have you learned about these children today? What observations or reflections would you like to share with other adults in your faith home? How might you do that?

TAKING IT HOME

A place will express itself through the human being just as it does through its wild flowers. — Lawrence Durrell

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Today we talked about our worship home. It is an important distinction for children to understand that worship is our corporate response to our faith. It is in worship that the symbols of our faith home are used and the music of our faith home rings out from voices of all ages. It is in the worship area that our faith beliefs are visually presented through banners and pictures.

As part of our exploration of our worship home we enacted a child dedication service and drew pictures related to our worship experiences. In addition, we made paper dolls which express the unique gifts that your child has to share with the world. Make sure you ask about (and honor!) the particular gifts that your child included on the doll.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Today our Creating Home group explored the structure and meaning of our congregation's child dedication service. You might wish to ask your child what they think the ceremony means. If they are unsure, you can share that a child dedication is a way both to recognize and honor the particular child, and to promise that the community will be there for that child as they grow. If your child has been dedicated in your congregation, tell them what the ceremony was like. Ask your child if they feel the congregation is holding up their promise. What

happens in your faith community that makes your child feel recognized and supported? What more could happen?

If your child has not been dedicated, and if your congregation does dedication ceremonies for older children, you might ask your child whether they would like to be part of such a ceremony. What would it mean to them to take part?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Ritual

You can have your own child dedication ceremony at home, reminding your child(ren) that a family, like a faith home, has a sacred covenant to care for and cherish the children. Here is a blessing that you can do with your children at home. You will need to gather symbols of earth, air, water and fire beforehand.

(Child's name), may you be blessed by water, by a mind fluid enough to ever seek new ground and new insights; a heart which understands the depths of human emotion; hands gentle as a running stream. (Touch head, chest and hands with water.)

May you be blessed by earth, by a mind unwavering in conviction in what is right and true; a heart steady and grounded in love; hands which are strong and firm in action for justice. (Touch head, chest and hands with a stone.)

May you be blessed by air, by a mind keen as the north wind, a heart strong as the wind off the ocean, hands as comforting as a cool breeze. (Brush head, chest and hands with a feather)

May you be blessed by fire, by a mind which lights the way to new understandings, a heart which burns with passion and compassion, hands enlivened by the spark of the creative. (Raise a lighted candle over child's head, chest and hands.)

May you be blessed by the Spirit, which moves through all beings. May yours be the mind and heart and hands by which the Spirit takes shape in the world.

A Family Adventure

You can expand your child's experience of worship by choosing a Sunday when they will stay with you throughout the entire service. You might want to make a packet of paper on which your child can draw during the worship experience. As the service progresses, you can prompt particular drawings by questions such as "How do we show our concern and good wishes for people in our community?" "What do you see in the room that is special to being a Unitarian Universalist?" "What does it feel like to have a whole group of people singing together?"

You may like to sit on an aisle in case your child wishes to exit during the sermon – it's hard to sit still through a long talk that doesn't mean much to you! (Although playing silent games such as tic tac toe can help.)

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Explore worship in the congregational setting as an aspect of family faith development. For further information about family faith development at home and family devotional and worship time, [this link](#) to the Unitarian Universalist Association will give you resources to use for all ages. The UUA website also offers [resources](#) on Whole Family living that includes both home and worship. Also on the Unitarian Universalist Association website, [Rev. Greg Ward](#) writes about the value of and strategies for creating intergenerational worship.

Today, the children heard a version of the traditional Chinese story, "The Empty Pot." Find this story on the [Tapestry of Faith](#) website. Or, read the version by Elaine Lindy on the website [Whootie Owl's Stories to Grow By](#). This searchable site has many more stories from a variety of cultural traditions, along with resources for using stories and storytelling in teaching. *The Empty Pot* by Demi (New York: Henry Holt, 1990) provides another version of the tale.

The Unitarian Universalist Association website's [Worship Web](#) is a rich resource of material to include in a worship service.

[Open Book: Family Stories as Faith Stories](#) is a collection of family stories by Unitarian Universalist ministers, religious educators and Family Matters Task Force members. You may like to read these stories each night in a family worship time, as devotions. Keep in mind that faith development does not happen only on Sunday morning. Parents are the main instrument of faith development in children of all ages.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: MY WORSHIP BOOKLET (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Four blank pieces of heavy paper or card stock for all participants
- Hole puncher, scissors, and yarn
- Crayons and/or color markers
- An order of service from recent worship at your congregation

Preparation for Activity

- Stack four pieces of heavy paper or card stock for each child. Punch two holes in the left side of each stack.

- Cut an 18-inch length of yarn for each child.

Description of Activity

As they each make a booklet of things they like about worship, children will identify and become more familiar with elements of worship in their faith home.

Distribute the four-page stacks of heavy paper or card stock to children at their work tables. Invite each child to line up the holes while you thread a length of yarn through the holes to make a four-page booklet. Wind the yarn through the holes and tie it in a tight bow on the front of each booklet.

Tell the children you will guide them through each part of a worship service as it usually happens at your congregation. They may draw on both sides of the card stock or heavy paper to show the parts of the worship service you will talk about.

On the cover, ask the children to draw the threshold of the church. Remind them that the "threshold" is the entrance, where you walk in.

On the second page, ask the children to draw the inside of the worship space. You may prompt them to draw what they see once they are inside and sitting down.

On the third page, ask children to draw the chalice that is lit at the beginning of worship.

On the fourth page, suggest children draw the people at worship.

On the fifth page, allow the children to draw their favorite part of the worship service.

You may wish to suggest that the children bring their booklets and a crayon to the worship space to draw their experiences and observations on the remaining, blank pages. If appropriate, you may wish to bring the children into worship. For some children, drawing can reduce restlessness during a worship service. The drawing exercise may also sharpen children's observations of the worship space and what goes on there.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: DESIGNING SEASONAL WORSHIP SERVICE COVERS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Blank paper for all participants
- Pencils, markers, and/or crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Ask worship planners if the children may design the front of a worship service bulletin for the next season. Find out if their work can be printed in color or will be printed in black and

white. Check on the size of the paper used and the margins.

- Gather sample worship service bulletins that have illustrated covers.

Description of Activity

Children will participate in worship as co-creators, by making the cover of a worship service bulletin. This activity will help children understand the planning that goes into a worship service.

Show the group the sample worship service bulletins you have brought. Explain that the children will make drawings that will become the front of bulletins in the future.

Talk with the children about what they will draw. You may like to suggest they focus on the season in which the worship service will occur. Discuss how nature looks in the future season and special events of the season. Remember, children this age are concrete. They find it easier to look out a window and tell you what they see than to imagine the future. You may want to bring a story book with good pictures of the season you will be illustrating.

Once the children have planned what they will draw, give them the paper on which you want them to draw. There is no wrong way for the children to draw. Allow them to create and share their gifts.

Bring the children's drawings to the congregational staff person or lay leader responsible for printing the worship service bulletin. When you know the dates the children's drawings will appear on the worship service bulletin cover(s), alert families using email, a mailed letter, or a phone call.

STORY: THE EMPTY POT

Adapted from The Empty Pot by Demi (New York: Henry Holt, 1990); permission pending.

Long, long ago, the Emperor of an ancient land was old and dying. He loved children but had none of his own. So the Emperor decided to choose one of the children of his land to be the next Emperor.

The Emperor also loved plants, and of these, he had many. So nobody was surprised by the test he offered the children of the land.

The Emperor called all the children to his palace. He said, "I will give one seed to each of you. Come back in one year. When I see what you have grown from your seeds, I will choose the next Emperor."

The children ran from the palace smiling. All they had to do was grow a seed and they would be Emperor. But a year is a long time. Most of the children decided to wait a while to do their planting, and as the year went by, many children forgot their seeds.

But one child, a boy named Chen, took care of his seed right away. Just like the Emperor himself, Chen loved plants. Chen carefully carried the Emperor's seed home, sealing it securely in his hands so it wouldn't fall, but not so tightly that it might crush.

As soon as he got home, Chen found a clay pot made by his Grandfather. He thought that pot would be just right to grow his seed. He washed the pot and dried it carefully. Next Chen found rich, black soil that had many worms in it to make it nourishing. Chen filled the pot with the soil. Then he planted his seed, carefully covering it with the soil.

Chen set the pot in the sun. Each day, he lightly sprinkled water on the seed. But nothing grew from the seed. Nothing at all.

Some weeks went by. The other children boasted to each other of the wonderful large plants they had grown, but Chen's seed did not grow. He tried moving the pot to another window. He tried watering his plant more, and even singing to his plant. But no matter what Chen did, his seed did not grow.

Then, a year had passed. It was time to return to the Emperor. Chen was ashamed that his seed had not grown.

His wise Grandfather said, "You did your best, Chen. You were caring and patient. Be honest with the Emperor and explain that you did your best. It will be enough."

So Chen returned to the palace with his empty pot held carefully in his arms. The children lined up to present their plants. The first child had a large plant with thick leaves, a ginseng plant that could be used to make paper and medicine. The next child had a eucalyptus plant, a healthy, strong plant that soon would become a tree big enough to produce food for many animals. By the time Chen's turn came, he was so sad about his empty pot.

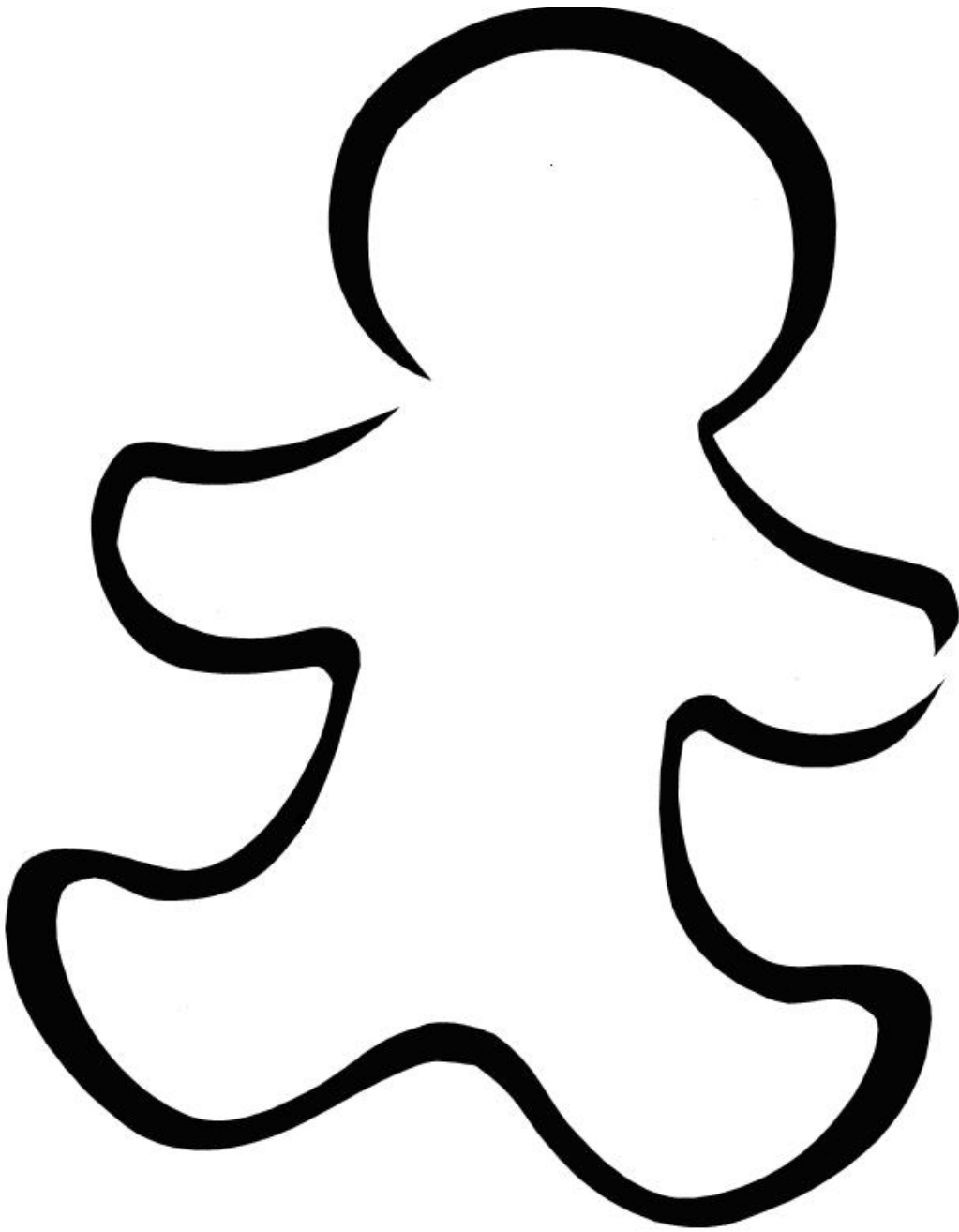
Feeling very embarrassed, Chen held his empty pot up for the Emperor to see. Chen explained how he had lovingly cared for his seed. Chen talked about his love for his Grandfather who had made the pot. He told the Emperor everything he had done to care for the seed, and how sad he felt that the seed would not grow.

The Emperor smiled and spoke. "There is only one among you who is honest enough to be the Emperor," he said. "The seeds that I gave you had been boiled so they would never grow. These wonderful plants some children have shown me did not come from the seeds I gave them."

Now some of the other children looked ashamed, because they had not been honest. And the Emperor knew it. "Only one child cared for the seed even when it did not grow," the Emperor said. "Only Chen gave the seed all it needed and asked for nothing. Only Chen was honest enough to show me an empty pot. Chen will be the new Emperor."

Chen moved to the Emperor's palace with his Grandfather. The old Emperor taught him many things, about gardening and much more. And when the Emperor died, he was smiling, because he knew that Chen would care for his land with love and honesty.

LEADER RESOURCE 1: PAPER DOLL



LEADER RESOURCE 2: THIS HOUSE

This reading combines the words of Kenneth L. Patton (Reading 444) and Psalm 133 (Reading 433) as published in *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook. Permission granted for Reading 444. Permission pending for Reading 433.

Leader:

This house is for the ingathering of nature and human nature.

Children:

How rare it is, how lovely, this fellowship of those who meet together.

Leader:

It is a house of friendships, a haven in trouble, an open room for the encouragement of our struggle.

Children:

How rare it is, how lovely, this fellowship of those who meet together.

Leader:

It is a house of freedom, guarding the dignity and worth of every person.

Children:

How rare it is, how lovely, this fellowship of those who meet together.

Leader:

It offers a platform for the free voice, for declaring, both in times of security and danger, the full and undivided conflict of opinion.

Children:

How rare it is, how lovely, this fellowship of those who meet together.

Leader:

It is a house of truth-seeking, where scientists can encourage devotion to their quest, where mystics can abide in a community of searchers.

Children:

How rare it is, how lovely, this fellowship of those who meet together.

Leader:

It is a house of art, adorning its celebrations with melodies and handiworks.

Children:

How rare it is, how lovely, this fellowship of those who meet together.

Leader:

It is a house of prophecy, outrunning time past and times present in visions of growth and progress.

Children:

How rare it is, how lovely, this fellowship of those who meet together.

Leader:

This house is a cradle for our dreams, the workshop of our common endeavor

Children:

How rare it is, how lovely, this fellowship of those who meet together.

FIND OUT MORE

This version of the traditional Chinese story, "The Empty Pot," was adapted from the version by Elaine Lindy on the website [Whootie Owl's Stories to Grow By](#). This searchable site has many more stories from a variety of cultural traditions, along with resources for using stories and storytelling in teaching. *The Empty Pot* by Demi (New York: Henry Holt, 1990) provides another version of the tale.

The Unitarian Universalist Association website's [Worship Web](#) is a rich resource of material to include in a worship service.

[Rev. Greg Ward](#) writes about the value of and strategies for creating intergenerational worship.

SESSION 14: COMINGS AND GOINGS

INTRODUCTION

We have to celebrate, because this brother of yours ... he was lost and has been found. — Christian scripture, Luke 15:32

In Creating Home, children discover and think about the journey that we as individual Unitarian Universalists take as we move between our family homes and our faith home. When we make the choice to leave our family home and come to our faith home, we may be expressing a simple desire to gather with others, an enjoyment of the habit of fellowship, or a deep spiritual yearning for community. In Comings and Goings, we will explore how it feels to leave our family home and be welcomed back. We will also observe how the family systems within our family home change when we leave and return, and what does not change, whether we are at home or away. We will identify the constant in our family home, love.

The central story for this session is ["The Lost Son,"](#) (included in this document) an adaptation of a parable from Christian scripture. Sometimes known as the Prodigal Son, this story tells of a father's love when one son comes home. A parable may teach many lessons as it is read over and over. This session focuses on the feelings and actions of the younger son and the father in the story. How does it feel to be trusted when you leave home? How does it feel to be welcomed home? How does it feel in a family when you know you are loved?

If you are unfamiliar with Christian scripture, this might be a time to increase your knowledge. Present day conservative Christians believe that Biblical texts are literal, inerrant texts written by God. Liberal, main line Christians believe the scriptures are written by humans and inspired by God. This is a huge difference and one to note when teaching with Christian texts.

GOALS

This session will:

- Demonstrate for participants that the love our families hold for us at home is always there for us, even when we are not present
- Help participants observe that family love is strong and compassionate
- Help participants understand the role of the family home to instruct us and then send us out into the world, always welcoming us on the return

- Teach participants that Unitarian Universalist heritage and values are reflected in warm welcome at the threshold of each home
- Prepare participants to understand growing up as a way of making meaning and finding purpose that may need to happen while being away from home

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Listen and respond to the central story, ["The Lost Son"](#) (included in this document)
- Experience the story through dramatic play with stick puppets
- Apply the theme of coming and going to their own lives in a rhythmic chant
- Explore homecomings in their own families
- Experience losing and finding something in a game

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Lost and Found Game	5
Activity 2: Story — The Lost Son	10
Activity 3: Welcome Home Poster	10
Activity 4: Stick Puppets	15
Activity 5: Rhythmic Chant	10
Faith in Action: Home and Away — Long-term	30
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: On the Path Home	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Sit or stand in the middle of the meeting room and close your eyes. Slowly breathe in, hold for a count of four and breathe out. Slowly read the story, ["The Lost Son."](#) (included in this document) What word calls to you? Think about that word. Concentrate on feelings surrounding that word.

Now read the text again, focusing on the word that called to you and its place within the story. What new feelings or thoughts surround your word, as you see it again within the text? Next, think about one child in the

Creating Home group. How do you see that child in relation to the word you chose? Be open to your feelings about the story, the Lost Son and the word that you have chosen.

Now think about the children who come to Creating Home. How significant is it for you that children return for the next session? Does your enthusiasm for leading Creating Home increase or decrease with the number of children that return? How can you connect with children this week to ensure they know they are welcomed home in Creating Home?

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- On top of the labyrinth, place the basket of stones.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. The labyrinth should be spread on the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand, if needed. Be aware of newcomers or guests in the room. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to say with you:

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

Invite children to place their stones on the labyrinth, one at a time. Tell them they may share any joys or concerns they would like to when it is their turn to place their stone. You may say:

When you came across the threshold of our meeting space today, did you find your stone? Each stone is a symbol of us as members together of this religious education home. As we light the chalice, say your name for everyone and place your stone on the labyrinth. Look at the flame in the chalice and breathe deeply. Anyone who wishes may share with us something that happened on in your family home this week. You may share a joy, a concern, or simply something that happened.

Close the joys and concerns by affirming that it is very good to be together.

Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: LOST AND FOUND GAME (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Five large buttons

Description of Activity

This game will help children understand that objects, if lost, can be found. The discussion following the game will help children understand that intangible things, too, can sometimes seem lost, but are still somewhere and can be found.

Begin by showing all the children the five buttons so they can recognize them. Choose one child to be the "hider" and tell the other children they will be "finders." Ask the finders to stand against one wall together and close their eyes while facing the wall. Give the hider the five large buttons. Tell him/her to hide the buttons in the room and then sit down and say "Go." When the hider says "Go," direct all the finders to look for the buttons. The finder who finds the last button gets to be the hider next.

Play several times. Then, collect the buttons and gather the children together. Ask the children if any of them have ever been lost accidentally in a store. Allow a few brief stories. Ask them how they felt when they were found by someone they knew. Ask if any of the children have stayed overnight with a friend or at a relative's home. Were they sad when they left home? Why? Were they happy when they returned home? Why?

ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE LOST SON (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of story, ["The Lost Son"](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: A quarter, two dimes, and a nickel
- Optional: ["The Lost Son" coloring sheet](#), and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story, "The Lost Son" so you will comfortable telling it instead of reading it to the group.
- Optional: Have the coins ready to use in your follow-up discussion of the story.

- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

As children listen and respond to the story, "The Lost Son," they are helped to understand that love is always at home even if you are not there. Part of family structure is saying "good-bye" to family members and then welcoming them home.

Gather the children in a circle, and tell the story. When you have finished, lead a discussion with these questions:

- Why do you think the younger son wanted to leave home?
- When the younger son was in trouble and had spent his money, where did he go?
- Have you ever made a mistake?
- Does your family forgive you and love you in spite of your mistakes?
- Why was the older brother mad?
- Did the father treat his two sons the same?
- Do you think he loved both sons the same amount?
- Can love be equal without being exactly the same?

Many children this age are learning about the equal value of different combinations of coins. You can use coins to illustrate the way the father in the story loved his older and younger sons. Place a quarter in one of your hands, and two dimes and a nickel in the other. Open your hands to display the coins, and say:

Let's look at this money. I have a quarter here and I have two dimes and a nickel here. Are these the same? Not exactly. Just like the two sons were not the same. Are these equal? Yes, these are both of equal value. Each of my hands has 25 cents. But they are not exactly the same. That is how the father loved his sons, the same amount, but not the same.

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "The Lost Son" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 3: WELCOME HOME POSTERS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Large roll of paper, such as butcher paper or brown mailing wrap
- Optional: Large pieces of construction paper for all participants
- Crayons and markers
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors)

Preparation for Activity

- Write the words "Welcome Home" on newsprint, and post.
- If you will give each child a long piece of paper from a paper roll, make sure you have enough table and floor space for everyone to work on their own "Welcome Home" sign. If space is tight, you may prefer to give each child a large piece of construction paper, instead.
- If the group made a "Welcome!" sign together in Session 12: John Murray, be ready to point out the sign as you introduce this activity.

Description of Activity

Tell the children they will make signs for their family homes, to welcome home family members. Ask them for ideas about how they could use a "Welcome Home!" sign at home. To prompt, suggest that they might like to welcome siblings home from school or play, welcome parents home from work or grocery shopping, or welcome anyone home from an overnight or longer time away.

If the group made a "Welcome!" sign together in Session 12: John Murray, direct their attention to it. Ask them what is the same and what is different about the sign they will make now. Allow some comments. Then, say in your own words:

A welcome sign shows hospitality no matter where it is. It says, "This is my place, and I am glad you are coming into it."

People we don't know might come into our meeting space. They might be visiting us, just for one time. The sign tells them they are welcome here with us.

Continue in your own words — or, if the group has not made a "Welcome!" sign together — begin your introduction here:

The people coming into our home are usually people we know quite well. We might see them every single day. We still like to let them know we welcome them and a "Welcome Home" sign can do that.

If someone in your family has been away overnight, or longer, they may find it especially nice to see a "Welcome Home" sign when they return home.

Give each child a length of paper from the roll or a large piece of construction paper. Invite them to copy the words "Welcome Home" on their posters and decorate it any way they like.

Visit each child as they work. Some may want help making neat, large, letters. If a child wants to welcome home a particular family member, help them write that person's name on the poster.

ACTIVITY 4: STICK PUPPETS (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of Handout 1, Lost Son Stick Puppets
- Crayons or markers
- Tongue depressors or straws, at least three for all participants
- Tape, glue sticks, or a stapler

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 1, Lost Son Stick Puppets, on card stock for all participants.
- Decide whether to provide glue, tape, or staples for children making their puppets. Staples hold the best but sometimes come out and can be difficult for young children to use safely.

Description of Activity

Children will learn more about the layers of the Lost Son story through acting out the story with stick puppets. Help the children to begin coloring the three puppets and cutting around each puppet outline. Younger children may need help with cutting while older children may be able to cut independently.

Once the puppets are colored and cut out, help children attach each puppet to a tongue depressor or a straw with tape, glue, or staples. Allow time for children to reenact the story of the Lost Son with their puppets.

ACTIVITY 5: RHYTHMIC CHANT (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Rhythm sticks, a pair for each participant
- Optional: Color markers or fast-drying paint
- Optional: Handouts for all participants, made from Leader Resource 1, [Rhythmic Chant](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Download and print out Leader Resource 1, [Rhythmic Chant](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Photocopy Leader Resource 1, Rhythmic Chant, for all participants
- Obtain rhythm sticks for all participants to use. If you do not have pre-made rhythm sticks, you can use one-inch dowels, cut to lengths of 12 inches. You may like to have each child color or paint two dowel pieces to make their own rhythm sticks. If you use markers or fast-drying paint, children can decorate the dowels while they listen to the story, "[The Lost Son](#)," (included in this document) (Activity 2) and use the dowels as their rhythm sticks in this activity.

Description of Activity

Children will use rhythm sticks and a simple chant (Leader Resource 1, Rhythmic Chant) to focus on situations in which young children leave their homes and come back.

If the children decorate their own rhythm sticks in this activity and take them home, the faith home religious education experience is extended. If you choose to send the sticks home, be sure to send a copy of the chant, also.

Invite the children to sit cross-legged on the floor. Distribute the rhythm sticks and show the children how to hold them in their hands with their thumbs and palms facing inward. Children will do a four-beat rhythm by hitting both sticks together on the floor twice and then hitting sticks together once over their laps and holding a count, in this pattern:

- 1 — Floor
- 2 — Floor
- 3 — Together
- 4 — Hold
- 1 — Floor
- 2 — Floor

3 — Together

4 — Hold

The children will beat this rhythm throughout the chant.

Now, ask the children to put down their rhythm sticks to learn their spoken part of the chant. Tell them that after each line you say, they will respond with the line "We all come home."

Using Leader Resource 1, Rhythmic Chant, say your first line, then lead the children in saying "We all come home." If two co-leaders are present, have one read the leader's lines and the other assist the children in saying their part.

Now put together the rhythm and the words.

If you have time and the group seems ready for this, you may like to ask the children to contribute other phrases about occasions when they go away from home and then come back. Substitute individual children's suggestions for the provided words to make a new chant. Examples might be swimming lessons, a sleepover at a cousin's house, going to the supermarket, or walking a pet dog.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index card or post-it, bold marker, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the word "homecoming" with bold marker on an index card or post-it.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice. Invite the children to take their stones from

the labyrinth, place them in the basket, and return to the circle.

Then, ask the children to help you carefully fold the labyrinth and put it away.

You may like to add something new to the Closing. Ask the children to stand together in a circle holding hands. Invite them to take a deep breath together and try an easy circle dance by walking counterclockwise in a circle as they begin singing the Closing words. Have the group switch direction at each new line of the chorus to "When Our Heart is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*. The circle dance will also work if the group recites, rather than sings, the song:

When our heart is in a holy place, (circle left slowly)

When our heart is in a holy place. (circle right slowly)

We are blessed with love and amazing grace. (circle left slowly)

When our heart is in a holy place. (face inward and look at each other)

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The word for our Word Wall today is "homecoming."

Show the group the index card or post-it on which you have written "homecoming." Talk about what the word means, referencing the story, ["The Lost Son."](#) (included in this document)

Post the word on the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Say in your own words:

Today we talked about a special family, just like all of your families are special. We learned that families love us even when we are not at our family home. People cannot be lost from our hearts when we love them. We hope that you have wonderful days ahead with your family and that you return to us at our faith home next time.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind participants to give the handout to their parents.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: HOME AND AWAY — LONG-TERM (30 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Blank paper for all participants

- Long letter envelopes and postage stamps
- Crayons, markers, and items to decorate cards
- Text messages made from Leader Resource 2, [Home and Away Cards](#) (included in this document), scissors (including left-handed scissors), and rubber cement or glue sticks
- Optional: Photographs of individual participants, or a digital camera and color printer
- Optional: Return address labels pre-printed with the address of your congregation

Preparation for Activity

- Obtain a list of college students connected with your congregation and their college addresses. If your congregation does not have this information, it might be a good time to collect it. Call each family that has a college student, ask if they would like the children to send the student a card, and obtain the student's college address. You may also ask if the family knows of another family with a college student who might like to receive a card.
- Ask your director of religious education about whether you need to seek parents' permission to use or create photographs of children for this project. Then, by email or in a handout ask parents to provide a photograph of their child to include in the card to a college student.
- You may wish to use a digital camera and a color printer on-site at your congregational meeting place to create photographs of individual children or the entire Creating Home group. If you choose to do this, make sure at least two adults will be leading this activity.
- Download and customize Leader Resource 2, Home and Away Cards to produce text messages to glue inside the cards. On your computer, you may wish to make the font size larger, giving five- and six-year-olds more room to write their names and the names of the college students to whom they write. Photocopy your customized Leader Resource page to make enough text messages for the cards you plan to send. If you have more than one text message per sheet, cut out the blocks of text.

Description of Activity

This activity will attune children to faith home members who have left and will return. With hand-made greeting cards, the children communicate with these absent members to show that the faith community keeps them in its thoughts.

In many congregations, college students living away from home are often a lost part of our Unitarian Universalist faith homes. Around mid-August, young people who have grown up in our congregations start to slowly disappear. They may float in and out of worship when they are home for a weekend or a vacation. We notice them again for a few weeks at Christmas and then they appear again magically just before summer.

Gather children at work tables and distribute paper. Show the children how to fold the paper to make a card. Allow them to decorate the card any way they wish. Explain that the cards will go to young adults who used to be in religious education, just like they are now, when they were younger. As the children work, remind them that the cards they are making are not associated with a special occasion or a holiday. The cards are just to remind the college students that people from their faith community are thinking of them.

If you are taking and print digital photographs on the spot, have one adult do this while another adult helps children with their cards.

If you are including photographs with the cards, help each child write their first name on the back of their picture. If children prefer to glue a photograph to the card, help them write their names under their pictures.

On the inside of the cards, help children glue the text message you have made from Leader Resource 2, Home and Away Cards. Help the children write the college student's name and their own name in the appropriate blanks. Depending on how many college students' names you have, some children can make two or more cards, or you may have two or three children work together on a card for a single college student.

Children can fold their cards to fit into the envelopes and attach the postage stamps. If you have return address labels with the faith home address, children can also put those onto the envelopes. You will need to do the addressing.

Including All Participants

Your congregation may have other kinds of absent members to recognize, in addition to or instead of college students. A military employee who has been dispatched from home, a member of the faith community involved in a long hospitalization, or a member visiting for an extended time with a new grandchild or an ailing parent are examples. Adapt this activity to fit your faith home community.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Some children at this age have gone away from their homes and returned more than once. Others have never

spent a night away from home. There may be some in Creating Home who have left a home and settled into a new one, never to return to the first. When you talked today about leaving and returning, did you sense that the children understood and related to the idea of "returning home?"

For some children, the idea of themselves as family members who can welcome others home may have been new. Reflect on the time you have spent with the group. When, and how, did you see children recognize, accept, or perhaps express pride in taking the role of "welcomer" in their families?

TAKING IT HOME

We have to celebrate, because this brother of yours...he was lost and has been found. – Christian scripture, Luke 15:32

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

Today we used a version of the Prodigal Son story from Christian scripture as a way of focusing on the ways we move away from and back into our homes. The story, "The Lost Son," helped us illustrate that the love of family is constant whether you are at home or away. The story highlighted the importance of feeling welcomed home, and the importance of welcoming others.

Your child made a Welcome Home poster which you can display on your front door or in a room such as the kitchen where family members congregate when they come home. Or, save the Welcome Home poster for a special occasion if you know that someone in your family will be returning soon from an absence such as college, military service or even a work-related trip. The poster, then, can serve as a daily reminder that your family rejoices in each other's presence, or can be a special celebration of the return of a loved one who is never forgotten while they are away.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

In the story, "The Lost Son," the younger son makes some bad mistakes, but is welcomed home anyway. This story provides a good introduction for talking with your child about how they feel when they break a rule. Are they sad? Embarrassed? Ashamed? How does your child imagine you feel when he/she breaks a rule? Angry? Hurt? Tell your child how you do feel, and that you still love him/her. Talk together about these questions: How do we fix things up when someone has broken a rule or made a bad choice? How do we get over our sad or hurt or angry feelings? In addition to reminding your child that no matter what mistakes they make you will always love them and always welcome them home, you might want to tell a story of some time

when you made a bad choice, how you fixed things up afterward, and how you were welcomed home.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Ritual

Does your family have a ritual for welcoming family members home? A ritual can be something as simple as a hug or a kiss. How do you greet your child when you pick them up from school or daycare? If most of the family is home when a parent returns from work, how is this person greeted? You may wish to create your own family ritual of welcome home, which might include:

Everyone getting up from what he/she is doing to greet the returning person.

A "sandwich hug" in which a returning person is squeezed between everyone who is already home.

Taking a few minutes at the point that everyone returns home to let each person share the best and the worst thing about their day.

A Family Game

Hide and seek is a fun way to practice being lost and found, and reminds children that their family will always come looking for them and be happy to see them again. It is also a way that very young children can experience the independence of being "on their own" in a safe environment, secure in the knowledge that they won't be "lost" for very long.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

[*The Runaway Bunny*](#) by Margaret Wise Brown (HarperCollins, 1972 [1942]) is a classic story for young children about a young bunny whose mother promises to find him no matter what shape he should take.

You may wish to read another version of the [parable of the Prodigal Son](#), and/or [a sermon by UU minister Alison Cornish](#) which explores the theme of the Prodigal Son story.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: ON THE PATH HOME (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Copies of [On the Path Home](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- Crayons or markers

Preparation for Activity

- Download, print, and photocopy On the Path Home

Description of Activity

Children love to do simple mazes. This maze resembles a labyrinth; there are several ways to get "home." Distribute Handout 2, On the Path Home and set crayons or markers at worktables. Tell the children to imagine they are someplace away from their home. Say in your own words:

You have had fun today, doing something you like, but now it is almost time to go home. Draw yourself in the middle, getting ready to go home. If you want, you can draw yourself here in Creating Home. Or, you can pretend you have been doing something else this morning and draw yourself getting ready to go home from there.

Invite them to draw and color themselves first, then complete the maze with a crayon or marker to find their way home.

STORY: THE LOST SON

Adapted from Christian scripture.

There once was a father, who had two sons. The younger son wanted to leave home and travel to distant lands. He asked to have his inheritance. So the father divided his wealth and gave each son his half. The older son stayed at home, continuing to work with his father as before. But the younger son went on a trip. He spent all his money having fun, and one day it was all gone.

When the younger son's money ran out, he was in a faraway land where he knew no one and could not find a job. He finally found a job taking care of the pigs that belonged to a farmer. Often the younger son had less to eat than the pigs, for he was now very poor.

One day the younger son said to himself, "I should go home. Back at home, my father's workers have bread enough to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have wasted your money. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your workers.'"

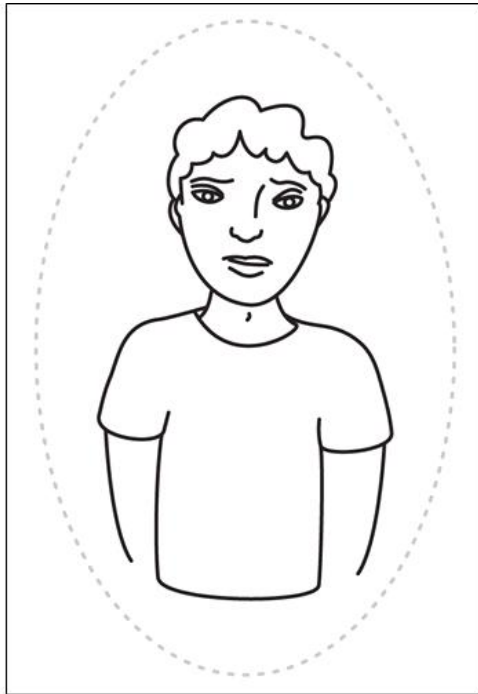
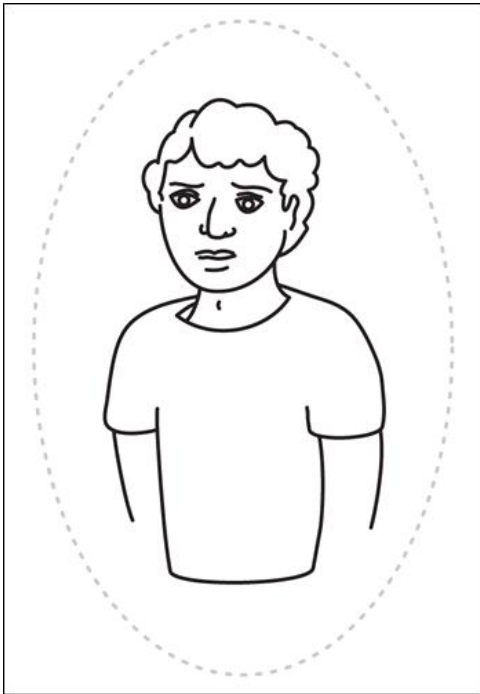
So the younger son went home. When his father saw the younger son coming toward him, he rushed to him and kissed him. The younger son said, "Father, I have wasted your money. I am no longer worthy to be your son." But the father was so happy to see his son he sent his workers to make a great feast to celebrate the homecoming of his younger son. The father smiled and said, "Let us celebrate. My younger son was lost and now is found."

About this time, the older son came home from his job. He heard the music and dancing at the welcome home feast. He asked a worker what was going on and was told the celebration was for the safe return of his brother.

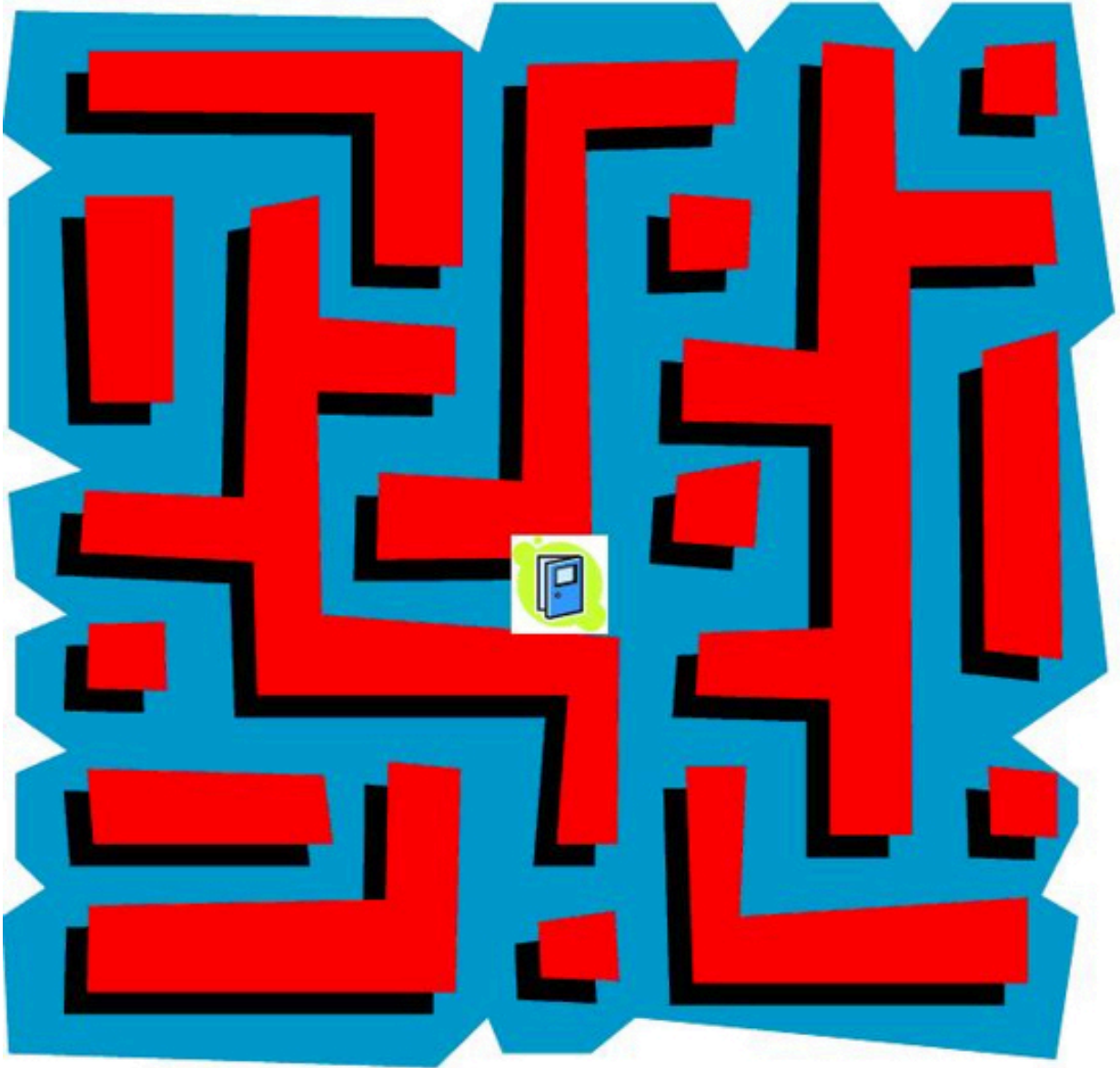
The older son got mad and refused to come to the party. His father came out and began to plead for the older son to come inside. The older son said, "Father, for years I have been working with you. I never disobeyed you. You never gave me a party so I could celebrate with my friends. And now, my brother has spent his money and come home poor and you are giving him a party. I'm mad."

The father said to him, "Son, you are always with me and all that is mine is yours. But we have to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was lost and has been found."

HANDOUT 1: LOST SON STICK PUPPETS



HANDOUT 2: ON THE PATH



LEADER RESOURCE 1: RHYTHMIC CHANT

We get up in the morning

1 2 3 hold

and we go to school

1 2 3 hold

We all come home (hold).

1 2 3 hold

We all come home (hold)

1 2 3 hold

We go to (name of your congregation)

1 2 3 hold

and it's really cool.

1 2 3 hold

We all come home (hold).

1 2 3 hold

We all come home (hold)

1 2 3 hold

We watch a movie at a friend's house

1 2 3 hold

We all come home (hold).

1 2 3 hold

We all come home (hold)

1 2 3 hold

I have a field trip to the fire house.

1 2 3 hold

We all come home (hold).

1 2 3 hold

We all come home (hold)

1 2 3 hold

Our family goes and goes

1 2 3 hold 1 2 3 hold

Our family goes and goes

1 2 3 hold 1 2 3 hold

Then we all come home (hold).

1 2 3 hold

We all come home (hold)

1 2 3 hold

LEADER RESOURCE 2: HOME AND AWAY CARDS

Customize this text message. Then, cut and paste it multiple times into another document, so you can print four or five identical messages on one page. Make as many photocopies as you need for the cards you plan to send to college students.

Hello, _____!

I am in kindergarten/first grade and I go to religious education at your Unitarian Universalist congregation. We are learning about how it feels to go away from home and then return. We know you are at college and we wanted you to know that even when you are not home, we are thinking of you.

Have a wonderful day!

from _____

FIND OUT MORE

A book about finding family home in a non-traditional setting is *Coming Home: from the life of Langston Hughes* by Floyd Cooper (New York: Philomel, a division of Putnam and Grosset Group, 1994).

SESSION 15: MUHAMMAD

INTRODUCTION

We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been — a place half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Somewhere where we can be free. — Starhawk

Today you will explore feelings about one's faith home. The stories in this session are about the prophet Muhammad. He had strong feelings for Mecca, his childhood home and the home city of his clan. As an adult, Muhammad followed his deep desire to bring Islam to Mecca and build a faith home in the city of his family home.

This session might be some children's first introduction to Islam and Muhammad. In telling the stories in this session, you introduce Unitarian Universalist children to one of the world's most influential prophets or teachers and the world's second largest religion. You will have an opportunity to examine values Unitarian Universalism shares with Islam.

There are several aspects of Muhammad's story that connect with Unitarian Universalist values. One is Muhammad's persistence in holding true to his beliefs, as personally experienced, and sharing his beliefs with others. Through Islam, Muhammad's revelations about the nature of Allah and the nature of the universe spread.

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe in truth that comes from direct experience and we believe that speaking our own, personal truths is both a right and a responsibility. We believe we must all listen to our hearts and heads as we go through life's journey. We do not accept religious principles solely because others tell us to believe. We also believe that, at times, we are obliged to act on our beliefs. These values are present in the story of Muhammad's relationship with Mecca.

In Activity 1: Guided Labyrinth Meditation, you will document the children's comments about what they enjoy about their faith home. A short-term Faith in Action activity, Spreading the Word, guides you to engage the children in sharing these comments with others, via the congregation's website or printed bulletins. This Faith in Action project may require the permission of your director of religious education as well as the children's parents. You will also need to involve an adult in the

congregation who is responsible for the website or other publicity materials.

GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce children to the life of the prophet Muhammad
- Explore feelings, both positive and negative, that can be evoked by your faith home
- Make connections between some values and experiences children find at their Unitarian Universalist faith home and some values and experiences that can be found in Islam
- Offer children an inward journey, using guided meditation and a labyrinth
- Provide an experience for children of gaining insights from one of the Unitarian Universalist sources, the world's religions

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Use a labyrinth to take a guided, inward journey
- Practice seeing things differently
- Learn about the prophet, Muhammad
- Practice cooperation and problem solving skills
- Learn about the poet, Rumi
- Learn about Islam as a religion defined by beliefs, practices, and history
- Discover a way Unitarian Universalism connects to Islam as a source
- Optional: Interpret poetry with acting and movement
- Optional: Build a timeline of their faith home and their families' participation in it
- Optional: Use their own articulated, positive experiences of their faith home to communicate about your congregation to newcomers and visitors
- Optional: Reinforce their understanding of parallel functions of a faith home and a family home

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY:	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Guided Labyrinth Meditation	10

Activity 2: Now You See It, Now You Don't	10
Activity 3: Story — Muhammad of Makkah	10
Activity 4: The Stone in the Ka'ba of Makkah	10
Activity 5: Rumi	10
Faith in Action: Our Faith Home Timeline — Short-term	15
Faith in Action: Spreading the Word — Short-term	10
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Dramatizing Poetry	20
Alternate Activity 2: Bees Fly Back to Faith Home	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

This session focuses on Muhammad's feeling for his faith home. The story describes how his feelings, and his beliefs, changed over time. Consider yourself in light of this issue. Are you still practicing the faith you were introduced to as a child? Does it still fit you? This might be a difficult question for some people. If you have left a previous faith home, the leaving might have been painful and difficult. Acknowledge the feelings you have.

Now acknowledge that you no longer have to dwell in this hurtful place. Think about the congregation in which you are teaching children about their faith home. This faith home can be yours, too. Perhaps it already is; perhaps you feel you are still new to it and are still unsure.

Think about the children you will be with today. Your work with them will shape how they understand their faith home. If they experience a place of acceptance and love where myriad theologies can coexist, perhaps they will never need to look for another faith home. May it be so.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand, if needed. Be aware of newcomers or guests in the room. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.
- On top of the labyrinth, place the basket of stones.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. The labyrinth should be spread upon the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand, if needed. Be aware of newcomers or guests in the room. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to say with you:

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

Invite children to place their stones on the labyrinth, one at a time. Tell them they may share any joys or concerns they would like to when it is their turn to place their stone. You may say:

Each one of us has a stone. We place it upon the labyrinth today because here we are, at our faith home, returned again. Welcome.

Today, we will talk about the feelings people have for their faith home and why they return again and again. When Unitarian Universalists come to our faith home, we often take time to tell one another about the joys and concerns going on in our lives. Joys are the things that make you feel happy. Concerns are worries. This is your time to share a joy or concern, if you would like to do so.

Close the joys and concerns by affirming that you hope everyone has felt at home in Creating Home each time you have been together. Tell them you hope, even after Creating Home ends, that they will return for new journeys and adventures.

Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: GUIDED LABYRINTH MEDITATION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Creating Home floor labyrinth, or finger labyrinth (Handout 1, [Finger Labyrinth](#) (included in this document))
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- A copy of Leader Resource 1, [Guided Meditation](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: A tape or CD of someone reading the guided meditation aloud, and a tape or CD player

Preparation for Activity

- If you do not use a floor labyrinth in the Creating Home program, obtain one for this session. Or, make copies of Handout 1, Finger Labyrinth for all participants. A finger labyrinth will work well for this guided exercise, because all of the children can "walk" it at the same time.
- Post one or two sheets of blank newsprint for recording children's comments after the guided meditation.
- If you plan to do Faith In Action: Spreading the Word, find out from your director of religious education whether you need, and how to best obtain, parents' permission to use children's comments in a congregational publication or on a website. You may like to ask parents' permission ahead of time — before you record the children's comments.
- Review Leader Resource 1, Guided Meditation. Practice reading the meditation at a gentle pace, in an even and soothing voice. As you practice, be sure to pause after questions and whenever the listener is asked to change activity. You may wish to record the meditation in advance, and play the tape or CD while children walk the floor labyrinth one at a time or in small numbers. A taped meditation will also work if children are using individual finger labyrinths.

Description of Activity

As children use a labyrinth and guided meditation to take an inward journey, they focus attention on their faith home and their relationship with it.

If the children have walked the labyrinth before, let them know that this time will be different because their meditation will be guided. If you are using a floor labyrinth, clearly and simply explain how you want the children to move through the labyrinth to minimize the need to interrupt the meditation once it begins. If each child will use a finger labyrinth, invite the children to sit comfortably where they are not touching someone else, and distribute Handout 1, Finger Labyrinth.

Ask the children to take a few deep breaths together. Then begin reading aloud, or playing the recording of, the meditation.

Once the meditation is finished, allow children still walking the floor labyrinth to complete their journey. Then, invite the children to quietly gather in a circle. Ask if anyone would like to share some of their thoughts about activities they like to participate in at their faith home. They might include the following: learning something new in class, singing or hearing music, playing, seeing friends, lighting the chalice or a candle, making something, or hearing a story. Thank each child for his/her contribution, and summarize each new one on the newsprint.

You may like to ask the children:

Do you think children who belong to other religions and go to other faith homes participate in some of these same activities? Why or why not? Which ones?

ACTIVITY 2: NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON'T (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A large plate and an opaque cloth cover to cover it
- Seven or more objects

Preparation for Activity

- Arrange the objects on the plate. Cover with the opaque cloth.
- Decide whether, and how, you will divide the group into teams to play the game.

Description of Activity

This game challenges children to not just look, but really see. Bring out the plate of objects you have covered with an opaque cloth. Invite the class to play a game.

Activity 2: Guided Labyrinth Meditation asked them to look at something with their imagination. Now you want the children to look at something real and tell you what they see. Ask the children to get ready to look at the items on the plate when you remove the cloth. Then, remove the cloth for ten seconds. Cover the plate again, and ask if anyone can name all seven objects on the plate. Chances are that no one will be able to do so.

Now tell them you will let them look for another ten seconds. If you want to have the children work in teams, form the teams now. Uncover the objects for ten seconds. Then replace the cover and see how many objects the teams or individuals can name.

To make the game easier, expose the items for longer than ten seconds, use fewer items on the plate, or use items that are related (such as seven animal figurines or seven writing or drawing instruments). If the children work together as a group, they will more quickly name all of the objects.

To make it harder, expose the items for a shorter time, add items to the plate, make smaller teams, or require that children also recall the color as well as the name of each object (such as red pencil or black stone).

Play until all children have achieved success.

Ask the children what they noticed about the game:

- Was it easy or hard?
- Was it easier to remember all the objects on your own, or by working together?
- Once you knew you were going to be asked to remember the objects, did you focus on the plate a different way?

Say in your own words:

Sometimes we look at things without really seeing them. It might be something we see everyday — maybe on your way to school or something here at our faith home. We look at things, but don't always see them in great enough detail to recall them from memory. We remember things a lot better once someone reminds us to really look. Once we see something in a new way, we may begin thinking in a new way. Our story today is about a man who had such an experience.

ACTIVITY 3: STORY — MUHAMMAD OF MAKKAH (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story, "[Muhammad of Makkah](#)" (included in this document)
- Optional: "[Muhammad of Makkah](#)" coloring sheet, and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review the story, "Muhammad of Makkah" and prepare to tell it, rather than read it, to the children.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

Introduce the story in these or your own words:

Islam is a religion that many people follow, in many different places in the world. People who follow Islam are called Muslims. Many Muslims live in here in the United States. As part of their religion, many Muslims hope to visit a city they consider holy. That city is called Mecca and it is in the country of Saudi Arabia. Some people say its name "Makkah."

The Muslim religion was begun by a prophet named Muhammad. When he was a young man, he had to leave Mecca. His beliefs about many things were so different from most of the people in Mecca that he could not stay there. He had to leave many members of his family behind. Muhammad did this because it was very important to him to be free to follow his own beliefs. Later, he was able to come back to Mecca, bringing his own beliefs with him.

Before telling the story, ask if any of the children have heard of Muhammad or Mecca. Ask what they have heard. Affirm correct information.

Tell the story. Once you have finished it, ask the group:

- Even though he lived with different relatives, in different homes, he had always lived in Mecca. How do you think Muhammad felt when he had to leave Mecca?

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "Muhammad of Makkah" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 4: THE STONE IN THE KA'BA OF MAKKAH (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A large, heavy stone
- A bath towel or other strong cloth
- A copy of story, ["The Stone in the Ka'ba"](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: ["Muhammad of Makkah" coloring sheet](#), and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Place the heavy stone on a worktable that children can reach, or on the floor.
- Set aside the bath towel or cloth.
- Review the story, "The Stone in the Ka'ba" so you can tell it rather than read it.

- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

Children practice cooperation and problem-solving skills as they learn about some values of Islam. Gather the group around the work table where you have placed the stone. Tell the story, "The Stone in the Ka'ba."

When the story is done, bring out the cloth. Choose four volunteers to reenact moving the stone.

Engage the entire group in observing where and how the four volunteers need to cooperate. Can they lift the stone together and place it on the cloth? What is it like to carry the heavy stone together, when it is on the cloth?

Invite the children to pretend another nearby spot is the Ka'ba wall. Let them work together to carry the stone there. Point out that to keep the stone balanced on the cloth the children carrying it together need to walk at the same pace.

Tell the group that Muhammad encouraged people to set aside their differences and work together for the good of all. As Unitarian Universalists, we believe in that, too.

Including All Participants

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 5: RUMI (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook
- Optional: A tape or CD of Sufi music and the equipment to play it
- Blank paper
- Crayons or color markers

Preparation for Activity

- Find suggestions to research Sufi music in Leader Resources.
- Be ready to sing, or lead the children in singing "Come, Come Whoever You Are," Hymn 188 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.
- If the children do not already know the song, decide whether you want to teach it to them or simply to sing it so they can hear it.

Description of Activity

The children will discover a way Unitarian Universalism connects to Islam as a source.

Tell the children that a Muslim poet named Rumi once wrote some words that many Unitarian Universalist congregations now like to sing. Say:

Rumi wrote poems in the Arabic language, almost a thousand years ago. His full name was Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi. We sing the words in English. The song is our Unitarian Universalist hymn, "Come, Come Whoever You Are".

If the children learned Hymn 188 in Session 12: John Murray, they may be able to sing it with you. If they haven't learned it, you can teach it to them. Teach the children Hymn 188 by singing one line at a time and then asking them to repeat the line. Then sing the whole song together several times. If they, and you, know it well, you may like to sing it as a round.

Now tell the children you will read the words the way they sound in the Rumi poem. Share the poem with the class.

Come, Come whoever you are.

Worshiper, Wanderer, Lover of Leaving;

Ours is not a caravan of despair.

Though you have broken your vows a thousand times...

Come, come again, com

Rumi wrote poetry as a way to talk about love. Muhammad's love for Makkah was a driving force behind his wish to bring Islam to the city. Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, believes in the importance of love. In that way, Unitarian Universalism is similar to all of these three religions.

Invite the children to sit at worktables and draw a picture about love. Distribute paper and crayons or color markers. To help children get started, you may ask some questions such as:

- What color reminds you of love?
- Do you think of love in a particular place? Indoors? Outdoors?
- What animal reminds you of love?

To structure the assignment more, you can have children work in selected colors only. Challenge different children to draw "red love," "blue love," "yellow love," etc.

If have a CD or tape of Sufi music, tell children what they will hear, and play the music while they draw.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: An index card or post-it, bold markers, and tape
- Optional: A copy of *Singing the Journey*, supplement to the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook *Singing the Living Tradition*

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- If you have a Word Wall, write the word "religion" with bold marker on an index card or post-it.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice.

Tell the group that it is now time to share a closing ritual.

Invite the children to take their stones from the labyrinth and return them to the basket. Then, ask a few volunteers to help you fold or roll the labyrinth and put it away.

If you have a Word Wall, say:

The word for our World Wall today is "religion."

Show the group the index card or post-it on which you have written "religion." Tell the children:

Muhammad had strong faith. He had strong beliefs about what our world is and what God is. His beliefs became a religion shared by many people. The religion is called Islam.

Unitarian Universalism is also a religion. It is also based on shared faith and shared beliefs. There are many, many religions in the world.

Ask the group if they know about any other religions, or know somebody who belongs to or believes in another religion besides Unitarian Universalism or Islam. Affirm correct responses.

Add the index card or post-it to the Word Wall, or ask a volunteer to do it.

Next, invite everyone to hold hands and sing just the chorus to "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*.

If you prefer, invite the children to recite the words to the song:

When our heart is in a holy place,
When our heart is in a holy place.
We are blessed with love and amazing grace.
When our heart is in a holy place.

Say in your own words:

Unitarian Universalism is a living faith. It will change and it will grow, just like you will change and grow throughout your life. As you grow older, you will have questions about your faith and what to believe. I hope that no matter where these questions lead you, you feel you always have a home here in our congregation.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared. Remind participants to give the handout to their parents.

Thank and dismiss participants.

FAITH IN ACTION: OUR FAITH HOME TIMELINE — SHORT-TERM (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A roll of plain paper or several pieces of poster board
- Yardstick
- Color markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Gather information about your faith home's history and founders, including information you may have collected while leading Session 9 or 10 of Creating Home.
- Identify a place in or near your Creating Home meeting space to display a long timeline poster.
- Make a six-foot timeline poster using a length of paper from the paper roll, or by taping several sheets of poster board together. Using the yardstick to make a straight line, draw a horizontal line across the paper. Make vertical marks along the horizontal line to represent years, beginning with the year your congregation was founded or the building you meet in was built. If more than 50 years are

involved, consider representing the earlier years in decades instead of single years. Specifically mark recent years and the current year. Leave ample space for noting events over the past few years, as each child's family may have more than one to add.

Description of Activity

Children see their place in their faith home's history as they help build a timeline that charts the life span of your congregation and the events that mark different families' involvement.

Show the children the timeline you have begun. Explain that the first date is when your congregation was started (or when your building was built). If any founding members of your congregation are still active, let the children know who they are and put their names by the founding date.

Tell the group the year you started attending or teaching at the congregation. Write your name by that year. Ask the children how long they have been coming, and add their names. Some children might not know. If you know, explain to them that you remember when their family started coming, and add the family's name(s) to the timeline. Put guesses in pencil.

When families come to pick up their children, ask them to fill in their names by the correct date. They may also like to note the year of a child dedication, a marriage, or another family milestone, if they marked that occasion in your congregation.

Post the timeline where children and adults can reach it to add information. Invite children and guests visiting for the first time to add their names.

FAITH IN ACTION: SPREADING THE WORD – SHORT-TERM (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint on which you recorded children's comments in Activity 1: Guided Labyrinth Meditation
- Tape
- Optional: Computer and internet access
- Optional: Congregational publication(s) featuring children's comments

Preparation for Activity

- Discuss with your director of religious education the idea of using children's comments in a congregational publication. Determine how you will ask parents' permission, if you need it.
- Identify someone in the congregation responsible for publicity, publications, or the

website and offer them use of the children's comments. Plan together how the children's comments will be used.

- Once a plan is in place, invite the publicity, publications, or website contact to visit the group. Set the date and time. If possible, schedule the visit after children's comments have been printed in a bulletin or posted on the web. Plan to show the children their comments online or in print.
- Write a notice to families about the project, providing the date/time of the visit. Distribute by email or as a handout.
- Compile children's comments as a text document and provide the document electronically to your contact. Follow your congregation's policy about the use of names of minors on the website or in publications. You may like to use only the child's first name and age, or list the comments as "Quotes from the Kindergarten/First Grade Religious Education Group." Do not post or publish children's full names on the web or post or publish children's photos together with their names.
- Post the newsprint with children's comments from Activity 1: Guided Labyrinth Meditation.

Description of Activity

If you have done Activity 1: Guided Labyrinth Meditation and recorded children's comments about what they like about their Unitarian Universalist faith home, you may like to compile the comments for inclusion in a congregational publication or on its website. You will need permission from your director of religious education and possibly permission from parents.

When your visitor arrives, introduce them. Explain:

They help let people know about our faith home and the activities we do here. This work is helpful for people who might be looking for a new faith home. When you want to find out about a faith home, a good way is to look on the internet, or to read a bulletin about what's going on at a congregation.

Direct the children's attention to the newsprint you have posted. Remind the children what they said after the guided labyrinth meditation, by reading aloud some of the comments.

Engage the children in relating the comments they made after the meditation with good things others might like to know about their Unitarian Universalist faith home. Then, invite your visitor to tell and show what he/she has done with the comments.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Which activities in today's session went well? Which might need to be adjusted? Did the children have any prior knowledge, or was this their first introduction to Muhammad and Islam? Do you feel you were able to honor this important faith tradition and demonstrate how Islam is one of Unitarian Universalism's sources?

TAKING IT HOME

We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been — a place half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free. — Starhawk

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

This week we focused on the story Muhammad and the creation of Islam, and made the connection between the way Muhammad's view of religion changed and the way people, in their religious lives and in other ways, may have a shift of vision that causes them to see things in a new way. We also talked about the Sufi poet Rumi and experienced his poems through music and movement.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Muhammad had a shift of religious perspective that led to his founding the Muslim religion. If you came to Unitarian Universalism from another faith home, you could share that story with your child, including the reasons your beliefs and/or your worship needs changed. If your child was part of that shift, they may be able to share with you what they liked and disliked about the change.

It's also great fun to share "used to thinks." If you have some examples of misconceptions that you had when you were young ("I used to think that 'he had a change of heart' meant that someone took his heart out and gave him a different one."), you will likely inspire your child to share "used to thinks" of his/her own. Remember to model respect for all beliefs that others in your family share, even if your child currently holds beliefs that differ from your own.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Game

In our Creating Home group this week the children played a game that they might enjoy trying at home as well. Place seven household items on a plate or tray. Ask family members to get ready to look at the items on the plate when you remove the cloth. Then, remove the cloth for ten seconds. Cover the plate again, and ask if anyone can name all seven objects on the plate. If people can't name the items, let them look for another ten seconds. Then replace the cover and see how many objects the teams or individuals can name.

To make the game easier, expose the items for longer than ten seconds, use fewer items on the plate, or use items that are related (such as seven animal figurines or seven writing or drawing instruments). If the children work together as a group, they will more quickly name all of the objects. To make it harder, expose the items for a shorter time, add items to the plate, or require that participants also recall the color as well as the name of each object (such as red pencil or black stone).

If different people remember things on the plate differently, or describe them differently, you can take advantage of the opportunity to point out that very often in religious life as well people come up with different understandings and different descriptions of concepts like "God."

A Family Adventure

Do you have Muslim friends who live locally? Your family could ask to join them in a visit to a local mosque. Make sure, however, that you ask first about customs (such as removing your shoes) which you will need to observe. If you don't have access to a mosque, a trip to a Middle Eastern restaurant can provide a fun taste (pun intended) of the culture to which Muhammad belonged.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Some people who find their way to Unitarian Universalism do so because they did not feel the faith they were raised in was a good fit for them. These same feelings were experienced by the prophet Muhammad. Today's story, "Muhammad of Makkah," talked about his changing feelings for his faith home.

If you would like to read a few books about Islam with your child, try *Muhammad* by Demi (Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2003), and *I am Muslim* by Jessica Chalfont (Rosen Publishing Group's PowerKids Press, 1996).

You might also like to explore a [website on Islam for children](#) with your child to learn more about the history, teachings and customs of Islam, or check out [stories and more](#) available online.

A collection of Islamic wisdom tales you might enjoy reading to your child is *Ayat Jamilah: Beautiful Signs*, by Sarah Conover and Freda Crane (Eastern Washington University Press, 2004).

Go online to see photographs of the black stone of the [Ka'ba in Mecca](#) and [Muslim practices](#) during a hajj, or pilgrimage.

Additional resources on Islam include:

The [Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance](#) website

The Islamic Year by Noorah Al-Gailani and Chris Smith (Hawthorn Press, 2002)

Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet, a DVD of a KQED presentation (2001) created and produced by Alexander Kronemer and Michael Wolfe and directed by Michael Schwarz, available along with other DVDs and videos on Islam and its expression in the U.S. from the [Unity Productions Foundation](#), Alexandria, VA.

Islam, Empire of Faith, a PBS presentation (2001) produced by Gardner Films in association with PBS and Devillier Donegan Enterprises, distributed by Warner Home Video. Find related educational resources and purchase DVDs on the [PBS website](#).

Rumi and Sufism

To hear or purchase Sufi music online, visit a [website dedicated to Rumi](#). This site offers many additional links to poetry and music of the Sufi dervishes.

On the website of poet and Rumi translator, [Coleman Barks](#), find more Rumi poetry and further web links that can expand your knowledge and understanding of Sufism, especially in its modern expression. This site also offers books and recordings of poetry and music for purchase.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: DRAMATIZING POETRY (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- At least two copies of Leader Resource 2, [Rumi Poem](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Two adults are needed to lead this activity; arrange to have two co-leaders present.
- Decide how you will divide the group into two, smaller groups.
- Identify an additional, separate meeting space — ideally another room — where one of the groups can work.

Description of Activity

To more deeply experience the poet, Rumi, the children explore and then perform for other children a way to interpret Rumi's words in movement.

Gather the children in a circle. Invite them to listen to a poem by Rumi, a Muslim poet who lived many years ago. Read aloud the poem:

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
 Don't go back to sleep.
 You must ask for what you really want.
 Don't go back to sleep.
 People are going back and forth across the
 doorsill
 where the two worlds touch.
 The door is round and open.
 Don't go back to sleep.

Point out the reference to "doorsill," which is another word for threshold. Ask the children if they would like to act out the poem.

Divide the group in two and have each group gather with one of the co-leaders, in two different rooms. Each adult should bring a copy of Leader Resource 2, Rumi poem. Have each group work for 10 minutes to decide how they will act out the poem.

Bring the two groups back together. Invite each group to show the other the way they have acted out the poem. You may have one or two first graders who could read the poem aloud while others act it out. Or, have each adult read the poem while his/her group is acting out the words.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: BEES FLY BACK TO FAITH HOME (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Beehive poster made from Session 3, Leader Resource 2, [Beehive Poster](#) (included in this document) and bees made by children from Session 3, Handout 1, [Bee Body Parts](#) (included in this document)
- A bold marker

Preparation for Activity

- Place the beehive poster and the bees on a work table.

Description of Activity

Reinforce the connection between the functions of a family home and a faith home by having children revisit the bees and beehive they explored in Session 3. Gather to the group around the table where you have placed the beehive poster and bees. Review the reasons the bees returned to the hive, written on each bee during Session 3. Remind the children that the hive is the bees' family home.

Say in your own words:

Now we have spent time talking about a faith home. When we did a meditation, we thought of some of the reasons we return to our faith home, our congregation. Can you think of any of these?

As reasons are named, write the reason on the bees. There might be shared reasons (same as the reasons for returning to the family home) and new reasons (appropriate only for the faith home). Some reasons that apply to both might include to eat, to play, and to be together. New reasons might be to worship, to come to religious education, to sing, or to work together to make the world a better place.

If you have taken the beehive poster and bees down from a wall or bulletin board, replace them when you have finished. You may say:

Now the bees are going back to their family home and their faith home.

STORY: MUHAMMAD OF MAKKAH

This is a story about a city. The name of the city is Makkah al-Mukarramah, but sometimes it is called Makkah or Mecca. This city is in Saudi Arabia. It is a city thousands of years old.

This is also the story of a man. His name was Muhammad. Shortly before Muhammad was born in the city of Makkah, his father died. Before Muhammad was six years old, his mother died. Then Muhammad lived with his grandfather for two years until his grandfather also died. After that, he lived with his uncle. While Muhammad was still young, his uncle died, too, but other members of Muhammad's tribe took care of him until he became an adult, got a job, married, and started a family.

Muhammad's tribe was one of the largest in Makkah. Makkah was Muhammad's family home, but it was also his faith home. The people who lived there believed that the city was founded by the prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael. They believed their city was holy.

The ka'ba was a holy building in town where thousands of people would come to pray. Some of them believed and prayed to only one god, but most of them prayed to several gods. Statues representing these gods surrounded the ka'ba. Muhammad's people prayed to their gods at the ka'ba, and Muhammad did, too.

Various people praying to many different gods at the ka'ba was part of everyday life for Muhammad. He witnessed it all the time.

One day, Muhammad heard what he could only explain as the voice of God speaking to him. Muhammad was instructed to be a prophet or teacher to people everywhere that there was only one God. And so, he began to teach.

Many people did not want to hear what Muhammad said. They wanted to continue to worship the gods the same way they always had, and not change. They threatened Muhammad and his followers.

Muhammad could have chosen to keep quiet, but he did not. He saw the world differently now. He believed he had a right and a responsibility to speak what he saw as the truth because God had told him to do so. It was important to him that this city, that was the faith home to many, be a home to what he believed was the one true faith.

Muhammad had to leave Makkah because it was dangerous for him there. He moved to Medina and his followers grew. They called their faith Islam and they acknowledged Islam's connection to the prophets of Judaism and Christianity, who also prayed to only one god.

Even though he had many followers in his new home of Medina, who practiced Islam in a beautiful temple (or mosque, as they are called in Islam), Muhammad was not content. He believed that God wanted him to bring the faith of Islam to Makkah.

In 630 AD, he returned to Makkah and brought Islam to the city he had always considered his faith home. It is still the predominant faith in Makkah. It has also spread to many other places, and is now practiced by 1.2 billion people. It is the second largest religion in the world.

STORY: THE STONE IN THE KA'BA

One of the reasons Muhammad was able to get people to listen to him was because, from a young age, he had proven himself to be wise and just. Here is an example of a problem he was asked to solve.

Mecca found the walls of the holy building, the Ka'ba, needed repairing. So they fixed the walls. Within one of the walls of the Ka'ba resides a special black stone. It is a meteorite. The special black stone had been removed so the wall could be fixed. But now that the walls were fixed, the leaders of four of the tribes all wanted the honor of putting the special black stone back. They argued and argued about who would get to put back the stone. Finally, they decided to ask Muhammad what they should do.

(Ask the children what they think Muhammad might have suggested. If any of their suggestions involve cooperation, or doing the job together, say that a solution involving cooperation would be ideal because it would keep the peace.)

Here is what Muhammad suggested. He said, "Place the stone on a large cloth." The four leaders did what Muhammad suggested. The leader of each tribe held one corner of the cloth. Together they carried the special black stone back to its place in the Ka'ba wall.

HANDOUT 1: FINGER LABYRINTH



LEADER RESOURCE 1: GUIDED MEDITATION

As you start to walk, think about when you entered this building today. What did you expect would happen here today? What did you expect to find here today? Who did you expect to find?

Think upon these questions as you approach the center. When you reach the center, stop and let your thoughts come to rest. Take two deep breaths. Breathe in and out. Now you are here. Now you have arrived. What does it mean to you to enter into your faith home? Think of how you are feeling about being here, right now, in Creating Home.

Now it is time to return. As you begin your walk back through the path laid out before you, think about other times you have been here. If this is your first time here with us, think about times you have spent at other faith homes. It might have been in religious education. It might have been a worship service, maybe a holiday service. It might have been for a party or a clean-up day. Think about some of the things you do here at your congregation, your faith home. Think about the people who do these things with you: friends, teachers, family.

Now think about the people who are here with you right now as you cross over the threshold and finish walking the labyrinth.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: RUMI POEM

Coleman Barks, translated and used with permission.

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.

Don't go back to sleep.

You must ask for what you really want.

Don't go back to sleep.

People are going back and forth across the doorsill
worlds touch.

The door is round and open.

Don't go back to sleep.

SESSION 16: MEMORIES OF HOME

INTRODUCTION

Memory is lodged in pictures and feelings in the cells themselves. Like a sponge filled with water, anywhere the flesh is pressed, wrung, even touched lightly, a memory may flow out in a stream. — Clarissa Pinkola Estes

Home is a place of memories. Whether it is a faith home or a family home, memories flood our lives. Some memories connect us to the recent past and some become a conduit that links us to ancestors. In *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes articulates how it feels when a memory jumps out and surprises us. Once the floodgate opens, our hearts and hands must be open to receiving the gift of memory.

There is an obvious meaning of the title, "Memories of Home," for the final session in Creating Home. Yet, the title also raises the image of times when we change our physical home and must reestablish home in a new place. Sometimes a relocation of home includes a change of faith home. This may have happened more than once to some children in the group. It can be a scary and disorienting time. Be aware of families that have recently moved or have a move in their future. These children need security and can be helped by the attention of an understanding adult. Also vulnerable are children who have had their homes disrupted by a trauma, such as a fire at their home or a natural disaster such as a tornado or flood.

Activities in this session recap some of the themes explored in other sessions, while helping children identify what connects the old and new. Memories of both family home and faith home can be contained in physical objects, relationships, and rituals. A certain piece of furniture will travel to a new home and bring memories. Family relationships usually transfer to a new home. Rituals such as graces, Sunday night pizza, or bedtime routines can also carry over to a new home.

GOALS

This session will:

- Help each child articulate their unique contributions to their family home and faith home
- Model ways to articulate, honor, and rely upon one's memories of home with activities that provide closure to the Creating Home "journey"
- Convey that memories of our Unitarian Universalist faith home and our family home can sustain us in our daily lives

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Investigate and express their individuality through their names and handprints
- Explore how material goods as well as thoughts can produce positive memories to comfort and sustain us
- Learn that smells can also produce strong memories
- Review favorite activities from Creating Home
- Optional: Review the new words learned cumulatively in Creating Home

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Unique Name Design Signs	10
Activity 2: Foil Handprints	10
Activity 3: Story — The Memory Table	10
Activity 4: What's in My Suitcase?	10
Activity 5: Cinnamon Dough Ornaments	10
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Journey Meditation	10
Alternate Activity 2: Taking "Creating Home" Home	5
Alternate Activity 3: Memory Beads	10
Alternate Activity 4: Word Wall Memory Page	15

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

You began Creating Home by standing on a threshold and thinking about the children who would cross into the religious education space. Now try to focus yourself on memories of the children and specific incidents from your time with them. Answer these questions to yourself:

- What was the funniest thing that happened along the journey?
- How did one child learn more about relationships?
- When did you feel really good about the sessions?
- When did an activity not go well?
- How has Creating Home felt like a home to you?

- In what ways have you personally experienced a Creating Home journey?
- What lessons will you take into your own family home or faith home?

Open your heart to the possibility that each child learned a lifelong lesson about home in this religious education time.

OPENING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth
- Basket of name stones
- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write the chalice-lighting words on newsprint, and post.
- Memorize the chalice-lighting words so you can make eye contact with participants while you say them.
- Spread the labyrinth on the floor with the chalice in the center.
- On top of the labyrinth, place the basket of stones.

Description of Activity

As children enter, invite them to retrieve their name stones from the basket and join you at the labyrinth. The labyrinth should be spread on the floor with the chalice in the center and matches or a lighter at hand. Be aware of newcomers or guests in the room. Always have extra stones so you can offer the new people a chance to be part of the ritual.

When all are seated, light the chalice and recite these opening words. Invite everyone to say with you:

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

Invite children to place their stones on the labyrinth, one at a time. Tell them they may share any joys or concerns they would like to when it is their turn to place their stone. You may say:

This labyrinth reminds us that we are taking a journey together. Every session is another portion of that journey. This is the final stopping place on our journey. We will talk more later about how it feels to end a journey. Today each person will place their stone within the labyrinth. Each stone is a symbol of us as fellow members of this classroom home. While placing your stones, please say your name and share one thing you learned in our time together. Sharing together is a tradition in our faith community.

Affirm that it is very good to be together. Extinguish the chalice.

ACTIVITY 1: UNIQUE NAME DESIGN SIGNS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large sheets of blank paper or pieces of poster board
- A thick, black permanent marker
- Crayons or color markers
- A variety of stickers and other decorations
- Construction paper, scissors (including left-handed scissors), and glue sticks

Preparation for Activity

- Review Activity 2: Foil Handprints. Decide whether you want to integrate children's foil handprints into their name sign. If you do, leave room on each child's name sign for the foil handprint(s) he/she will cut out.
- On a large, blank piece of paper, use the permanent marker to write each child's name in "bubble letters" by drawing the outline of each letter.
- Distribute crayons, markers and other materials for children to decorate name signs at worktables.
- You may wish to think ahead of time about each child you have taught in Creating Home. During this activity, you will want to mention at least one specific memory of each child.

Description of Activity

Each child has brought something unique to this session. Their names will be remembered by the others in the group. Pass out the name design signs you have made, saying each name aloud as you go.

Tell the children they are each unique, one-of-a-kind, and can design their name any way they like. You may suggest they color each part of their name with a different color, or color the background behind the letters. The black permanent marker will help the letters stand out.

While the children are coloring, talk about different memories you have of each child. Make statements like, "I sure will remember how Tonya built that great house out of blocks." Or "Tim, I'll remember the bee you cut out when we talked about bee communities." Bring in memories from a variety of sessions, and be sure to tell at least one about each child.

Tell the children they may take home their name designs to remind them about their unique memories of Creating Home.

ACTIVITY 2: FOIL HANDPRINTS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A roll of heavy foil
- A pencil with a dull point
- A small stack of old newspapers
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Tape, glue, or a stapler
- Optional: Copies of Handout 1, My Hand Is Unique for all participants

Preparation for Activity

- Set up a work table for yourself with a small stack of newspapers, a roll of heavy foil, and a dull pencil.
- Place scissors at children's work tables.
- Optional: If you have not planned to include each child's foil handprint on their individual name signs (Activity 1: Unique Name Designs), copy Handout 1, My Hand Is Unique for all participants.

Description of Activity

Tell the children that another thing that is unique about each of them is their handprint.

Place the stack of newspaper on the table. The eight-inch-by-12-inch heavy duty foil pieces go on top. Help the children trace their handprints on the foil with a dull pencil. Children will then cut out their foil handprints and mount them on a paper that says, "My hands are unique in all the world." Tell the children these shiny hands will help them remember that they are special and can use their hands to help in their faith homes and their family homes.

ACTIVITY 3: STORY — THE MEMORY TABLE (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of story, ["The Memory Table"](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: ["The Memory Table" coloring sheet](#), and crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Review, download, and print out story, "The Memory Table."
- Practice reading the story aloud to ensure you can present it effectively to your group.
- Optional: Print the coloring sheet and copy for all participants. Place coloring sheets and crayons

where children can use them when invited but will not be distracted beforehand.

Description of Activity

Gather participants in a circle where they can sit comfortably and hear you tell the story, "The Memory Table."

Pause at the conclusion. Ask the group, "How can a table hold memories? How can it be that Steven's family table brings with it many wonderful memories that go where the table goes?" Allow several responses.

Then, ask the children if any of them have a piece of furniture or a special object at their homes that holds good memories for the family. Suggest a kitchen table, like Steven's in the story, a candle stick, or a couch everyone likes to jump on. Whatever items children mention, thank them for their contributions and affirm the positive place of memories in the home.

Including All Participants

Be aware of participants who may need to sit close to you in order to hear well or to focus their attention as you read aloud.

Offer children the opportunity to color the illustration provided for "Circles of Light" to engage different learning styles and to help children focus on or relate to the story. A coloring activity can be a "preview" of a story. It can work as a quiet activity to help children physically settle. You might use it afterward to help the group recall and respond to the story.

ACTIVITY 4: WHAT'S IN MY SUITCASE? (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- An empty suitcase

Preparation for Activity

- Bring in a suitcase large enough to pack for a journey but small and light enough for children to pass around in a circle.

Description of Activity

This game will focus children on thinking about what they are taking away from the Creating Home program. Gather with the children in a circle, with the suitcase in front of you. Say, in your own words:

The time we have spent together in Creating Home is like a journey we have taken together. Let's pretend this is our suitcase. Now that our Creating Home journey is almost over, we need to pack our suitcase to take home.

Let's think about everything we have done and seen and talked about on our Creating Home journey. What can we pack up to take home?

Prompt by mentioning activities and stories from the sessions the group has done. Once the children have begun to generate ideas, start the game. Tell the group:

I will put something in from our journey, and pass the suitcase to the next person. He/she will repeat the item I have packed, and put in something of their own. The next person will repeat both of the items, and add one of their own. Continue around the circle this way.

Model placing something in the suitcase and say:

I'm taking _____ (something from a Creating Home session, such as "a yummy honey parfait") with me in the suitcase.

Pass the suitcase to the child sitting next to you. Help him/her say:

I'm taking "a yummy honey parfait" and _____ (something else from a Creating Home session, such as "a cottage in the woods") in my suitcase.

Direct the next child to repeat the first two items and add another. Continue at least once around the circle. To end the game, you may tell the children:

We cannot really take the suitcase home, but I hope you will remember all the things we have put inside from our Creating Home journey.

ACTIVITY 5: CINNAMON DOUGH ORNAMENTS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Cinnamon dough for all participants (Leader Resource 1, [Cinnamon Dough Recipe](#) (included in this document))
- Waxed paper and paper plates
- Rolling pins, cookie cutters, and a sharpened pencil
- Ribbon and scissors (including left-handed scissors)

Preparation for Activity

- Make cinnamon dough, using Leader Resource 1, Cinnamon Dough Recipe.
- Tear off about 18 inches of waxed paper for each child and distribute at worktables.
- Place cookie cutters and rolling pins on worktables.

Description of Activity

The strongest sense for humans is the sense of smell, and cinnamon is a scented spice that, for many people, can spark pleasant memories of occasions such as celebrating holidays, picking apples, or snacking on graham crackers or doughnuts.

Distribute portions of cinnamon dough to the children at their worktables. Invite them to play with the dough and smell the wonderful smell; allow plenty of time to explore the dough.

Then, ask the children to roll out their portion of dough on their waxed paper, choose a cutter and cut a shape. Help children punch a hole in the top of their shape with a pencil, and cut a length of ribbon to pass through the hole. Make sure ribbons are tied on securely, without cutting into the dough.

Place each ornament on a paper plate for children to take home. Tell the children to let the ornament dry overnight before they try to lift it by the ribbon. Ask them to smell their ornaments at home and see how long the scent of cinnamon lasts — it might be a long time!

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice candle or LED/battery-operated candle
- Lighter and extinguisher, if needed
- Labyrinth, with participants' name stones placed on it
- Basket for name stones
- Optional: Index card or post-it, bold marker, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Review Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*, "When Our Heart Is in a Holy Place." Decide whether you prefer to have the children sing or recite the chorus words to close this session. If you will need the words and/or music to lead the group, place a copy of *Singing the Journey* near your chalice.
- Customize, print out, and photocopy the Taking It Home section for all participants.
- Review Alternate Activity 2: Taking "Creating Home" Home. Decide whether you would like to give each child a [Taking It Home Booklet](#), [Continuing the Journey](#). (included in this document) The Taking It Home Booklet shows how you can make each family a booklet of home extension activities related to a variety of the Creating Home sessions. Follow the directions to make the booklets. Add five minutes to your session plan for Alternate Activity 2: Taking "Creating Home" Home, and send each child home with a booklet as well as a copy of the Taking It Home handout for this session.

Description of Activity

Gather the group in a circle around the labyrinth. Relight the chalice. Invite the children to take their stones

from the labyrinth, place them in the basket, and return to the circle.

Then, ask the children to help you carefully fold the labyrinth and put it away.

Invite the children to stand together in a circle and hold hands. Lead the group in taking a deep breath together and, if you like, doing an easy circle dance by walking counterclockwise in a circle as they begin singing the Closing words. Have the group switch direction at each new line of the chorus to "When Our Heart is in a Holy Place," Hymn 1008 in *Singing the Journey*. The circle dance will also work if the group recites, rather than sings, the song:

When our heart is in a holy place, (circle left slowly)

When our heart is in a holy place. (circle right slowly)

We are blessed with love and amazing grace. (circle left slowly)

When our heart is in a holy place. (face inward and look at each other)

Say in your own words:

Today has been our last time together to explore how we create family homes and faith homes. We have been on a journey together and this is the end of the journey. I will miss each of you and I will remember the unique and special gift you have been to this Creating Home group. I wish blessings on your family homes and I hope to see you all in worship.

Extinguish the chalice.

Distribute the Taking It Home handout you have prepared and the Taking It Home booklets if you have prepared them. Ask the children to give these to their parents.

Thank and dismiss participants.

TAKING IT HOME

Memory is lodged in pictures and feelings in the cells themselves. Like a sponge filled with water, anywhere the flesh is pressed, wrung, even touched lightly, a memory may flow out in a stream. – Clarissa Pinkola Estes

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

The final session of our Creating Home curriculum explored memories of home and included the opportunity for children to make foil handprints and cinnamon dough ornaments.

Your child has been given a booklet with additional ideas for your family to discuss to extend the Creating Home program in your home. Please look over the booklet with your child. Ask them to tell you about the

activities the group did in some of the Creating Home sessions. Discuss together which ideas you would like to try at your family home.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...

Earliest memories can feel very distant, even for quite young children. What is the first memory of your home that each family member has? Adults may well remember the first time they saw the family home. Children may have lived their whole lives in this location. Encourage them to think back to when they were very small. Do they remember being in a high chair in the kitchen or dining room? Do they remember being in a play pen in the living or family room? Do they remember being in a crib or switching to a bed in a bedroom? What is the happiest memory each person has of being in your family home? What is the saddest memory?

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...

A Family Ritual

You can honor the special place your child (or each of your children) has in your home by sharing the memory of bringing them home for the first time. Just before bed in a darkened room is a good time to tell the story of their birth and/or homecoming. For biological children, share the story of realizing that labor had started, how you prepared for the birth, what the room was like in which the birth took place, and how, if the child was not born at home, you brought them home for the first time. For adopted or foster children, share the story of meeting them for the first time, what the journey to bring them home (local or international) was like, and how you felt bringing your child into the family home for the first time. End the ritual of your storytelling with "Wherever you go in your life, wherever you may live, our family will always be your home."

A Family Game

In this session the children made cinnamon dough ornaments, and talked about how important the sense of smell is to memory. You can play a game with smells by gathering up (while the other participants aren't watching) various household items that have distinctive smells, such as vanilla, spices, a peeled orange or lemon, dishwashing soap, a scented marker, perfume or cologne, a pet's toy, a shoe, or shampoo. See if, with a blindfold on, your child/ren can guess what the items are purely from their scent. Ask what sort of feelings or memories each of the scents calls up.

FAMILY DISCOVERY

Wilfrid Gordon MacDonald Partridge, by Mem Fox (Kane/Miller, 1995) is a lovely book about a boy who tries to figure out what a memory is – and how to return memories to his elderly friend.

Kids (and grownups!) can play a [matching memory game](#) online, with various kinds of pictures and levels of difficulty.

A String and a Prayer by Eleanor Wiley and Maggie Oman Shannon (Red Wheel, 2002) is a wonderful little book that tells the ancient history of beading and how beads are used in prayer.

To reinforce your own spiritual journey in connection to the Creating Home curriculum, read *Memories of God: Theological Reflections on Life* by Roberta C. Bondi (Abingdon Press, 1995), written to explain the author's personal theology and her journey toward her own faith identity.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: JOURNEY MEDITATION (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of Leader Resource 2, [Journey Meditation](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Mats or rugs for children to lie on
- Optional: Tape or CD of gentle, instrumental music and the equipment to play the music

Preparation for Activity

- Read Leader Resource 2, Journey Meditation so you will be able to smoothly lead the meditation

Description of Activity

This meditation can help children learn that both material items and thoughts can produce positive memories to comfort and sustain us in the future. Ask the children to choose a place (and a mat or rug, if you have them) and lie down comfortably on the floor. Make sure they are spread apart so they cannot touch one another. If children will be seated at worktables, help them space their chairs apart and invite them to lay their heads on top of their folded arms.

Start playing gentle music, if you have brought a tape or CD. Invite the children to close their eyes. Expect giggles and wiggles. Tell the children you are going to read them a story to imagine, and you want them to listen to the words and imagine with you what is happening.

Read aloud Leader Resource 2, Journey Meditation.

When you have finished, invite the children to sit up and talk about how it felt to be on a pretend journey. Ask if they felt safe on their journey when they did not know what was going to happen. Ask them if some of them felt like going back instead of going down the road. Ask them what they thought the road might lead to. Talk about how it feels to be part of a group of people that they know and trust.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: TAKING "CREATING HOME" HOME (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Booklets made using Taking It Home Continuing the Journey [Booklet](#) (included in this document) for all participants
- A candle to give each participant

Preparation for Activity

- Make a booklet for each child, using Taking It Home Booklet. Customize the booklet to reflect the Creating Home sessions the group has done.
- Purchase a taper or a votive candle for each participant.
- When you prepare the Taking It Home handout for this session, include information about how families can use the booklet and candle at home.

Description of Activity

Faith development happens mostly in the family home. To support the children's families as they continue on their journey of learning, send a candle and booklet home with each child on the last session.

This would be a wonderful project for someone in the congregation to make for each child and family.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: MEMORY BEADS (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Large, wooden beads
- Large, shallow bowls
- Jute or heavy string
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors

Preparation for Activity

- Purchase a variety of large, wooden beads, 10 to 20 for each child.
- Fill shallow bowls with beads.
- Cut an 18-inch length of jute or heavy string for each child.

Description of Activity

Invite the children to find seats at worktables. Distribute the lengths of jute or string.

Tell the children they will think about some of their favorite activities from Creating Home while they make a bead necklace to keep at their family home.

While you bring the shallow bowls of beads to each worktable, ask the children to think of one activity they liked during Creating Home. Say:

Once you think of an activity, choose one bead to start your necklace.

Children may need some prompting. Remind them about some of the central stories they have heard, some songs they have sung, or games they have played in Creating Home sessions.

Help each child tie their first bead to one end of the string, leaving a few inches of string at the end. Continue to ask the children about activities they remember while they bead. It is not important that every child have one activity for each bead. It is important that the children enjoy the memories of Creating Home and have a necklace to remind them of the fun times.

Tell the children they may take their necklaces home. You may say;

Here is another way our faith home and your family home are connected.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: WORD WALL MEMORY PAGE (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Paper, and crayons or color markers to share
- Index cards or post-its from the Word Wall
- Optional: Stapler
- Optional: Newsprint, markers and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Remove the index cards or post-its you have added to the Word Wall during the Creating Home sessions.
- Optional: Post blank newsprint to write words for children to copy.
- Optional: You may like to begin this activity while children make their cinnamon dough ornaments (Activity 5).

Description of Activity

If you have used a Word Wall during Creating Home, children can review together the words they have learned. Illustrating a word can deepen a child's understanding of its meaning.

Use the index cards or post-its from the Word Wall as flashcards to refresh the group's memory of the words.

Distribute paper and crayons or color markers. Ask each child to choose one word to illustrate. Invite them to use fancy letters, particular colors or any pictures that show what the word means and what it means to them. Help each child copy the word they have chosen from an

index card or post-it. Or, use newsprint to write some of the words for children to copy.

If children finish a word drawing, invite them to make another.

If a child makes multiple pages, staple them together to make a booklet. Help them write on the cover page: Creating Home Word Wall Memory Book. Or, you may wish to compile a booklet of the group's words to display in your congregation.

STORY: THE MEMORY TABLE

Seven-year-old Steven dragged his backpack down the unfamiliar pathway to his new house. School was over for the day, but Steven was not looking forward to going home. Yesterday a big moving van had brought all his stuff to 746 Maple Street and inside would be a mess of half-emptied boxes. This morning he had found his toothbrush, but no toothpaste. Mom said it was in a different box.

Steven felt lonely and sad. Everywhere he had been all week was new. He did not recognize faces at his new school. The new house did not greet him the same way as the old house. As Steven crossed the threshold of his new house, he slammed the new door and thought, "Even the door slams differently."

Standing in the front hallway, Steven looked up and saw his mom coming forward to give him a home hug. Home hugs at the door were his mom's specialty. Steven felt the familiar warmth and love as his mom hugged him. He smiled up at her and forgot his sadness as he said, "I sure hope that's peanut butter cookies I smell."

"That is a super nose you have there, young man" his Mother answered.

"Make way for super nose as it heads towards the peanut butter cookies. Close behind is wonder mouth that will eat those cookies." Steven yelled as he sailed down the hallway toward the smell of peanut butter cookies.

In the kitchen, Steven stopped and stared. Everything was put away and by the window was their very own kitchen table. This rough, pine table had been in his kitchen as long as he could remember. It had two chunky legs on the ends which his mom always said made it easier to push in the chairs. Around the table were four chairs with thick legs and padded seat covers with chickens on them.

Steven walked to the table and saw the red permanent marker spot from when he was two years old and started to draw without paper. At the end of the table, there stood a napkin holder he made in crafts at day camp and the funny chicken salt and pepper shakers from his Grandmother's house. In front of the salt and pepper shakers was the stained-glass chalice he made at his old church. Right in the middle of the table was a hollow spot from the marble slab his mom used for cutting out Christmas cookies. Next to the hollow was a huge plate of his favorite peanut butter cookies. Steven smiled as he sat down.

His mom came over to the table with two glasses of cold milk and sat down with him at the familiar table in her usual spot.

"I know you've been sad, Steven. You are missing all the old things and exhausted by all the new things. How are you feeling now?" asked his mom.

Steven munched a cookie for a moment and answered, "I was sad until I saw the table."

"What did the table do to make you feel better?" asked his mom.

"I started thinking about all the things that happen at this table. We have Thanksgiving here with lots of relatives and that can happen the same, here, too." Steven stated. "And the grace we say at this table will be the same, even if it's in a new place."

Steven's mom smiled. "What else will continue in this new house?"

"I can do my homework here and remember all the other times I sat here and learned things." Steven added.

"Steven, this table is the place where memories meet new experiences for our family. Our home is the place where we eat together, grow together and learn together. Even if the building where we meet is new, the good things that happen in our family home don't change."

Steven paused. Then he said, "Mom, can we light my chalice so I can remember all the times I learned at our old church? We are going to find a new church, aren't we, Mom?"

Steven's mom went to a drawer and got a match. "Yes, Steven," she said. "We will find a new faith home. Just like our family home, the rituals of our new Unitarian Universalist faith home will bring good memories. Let's light the chalice and say our affirmation from Sunday School (or religious education time) together."

Steven carefully lit the stained glass chalice. His mother helped him say the familiar words:

We are Unitarian Universalists,

with minds that think,

hearts that love,

and hands that are ready to serve.

Steven felt warm and comfortable saying the words with his mother. His heart now knew that he had many old memories to bring along with him as he went into new places. And each new place would provide new experiences that would become memories, as his family created a new home.

LEADER RESOURCE: BOOKLET

The 12-page booklet offers questions for family activities to extend the learning of many of the Creating Home sessions, questions for family discussion, and blank spaces for children to draw pictures related to the discussion.

Each sheet includes two pages of the booklet. If you have access to double-sized printing, you can make a 12-page booklet using just three pages of paper.

To make the booklets, print the sheet with booklet pages [2 and 11](#) (included in this document) on the back of the sheet with the [cover and page 12](#). (included in this document) Print the sheet with pages [4 and 9](#) (included in this document) on the back of the sheet with pages [3 and 10](#) (included in this document) . Print the sheet with pages [6 and 7](#) (included in this document) on the back of the sheet with pages [5 and 8](#). (included in this document) Fold in half and staple the center. To get printable versions of these pages, download the [Word document for this session](#) (included in this document).

LEADER RESOURCE: BOOKLET PAGE 1

See [instructions for assembling the booklet](#) (included in this document).

Creating Home



Continuing the Journey

Page 12

Our Ancestral Home

Take another walk through your home. Look for items that were handed down through generations from your ancestors. Look for pictures of those who came before you and celebrate the gift of ancestors.

LEADER RESOURCE: BOOKLET PAGE 2

See [instructions for assembling the booklet](#) (included in this document).

Page 2

On the Threshold

Take a family trip to the front door of your home. Talk about things that happen at the front door such as hellos and goodbyes. Talk about how important it is to have a safe and pleasant front door to welcome all who come in.

Page 11

Hospitality and Sharing

Discuss ways your share hospitality with others through food and fellowship. Are there ways you like to share as a family? Is there a future event you'd like to plan together?

LEADER RESOURCE: BOOKLET PAGE 3

See [instructions for assembling the booklet](#) (included in this document).

Page 10

Comings and Goings

Talk about places your family gathers away from home such as relatives' homes, the soccer field, school or your faith home. Have each family member explain how it feels to come home after being away for even a short time.

Page 3

Symbols of Our Faith Home

Take a family walk around your home. Can you find symbols of your faith home? Are there any chalices in your home? Does your home have any items that came from your faith home, such as worship service bulletins or a calendar that proclaims upcoming events at your faith home?

LEADER RESOURCE: BOOKLET PAGE 4

See [instructions for assembling the booklet](#) (included in this document).

Page 4

Working Together Makes a Home

Sit around a table, on the floor, or in chairs and talk about each person who lives in your home. The people in your home are a community. You work together, share together and learn together. Talk about ways that you share responsibilities.

Page 9

Families and Home

What roles does each family member have in the family home? Who makes money to provide for the home? Who supports the family through preparing meals? Who cleans up? Who helps keep family members entertained?

LEADER RESOURCE: BOOKLET PAGE 5

See [instructions for assembling the booklet](#) (included in this document).

Page 8

Hearth and Home

Where does your family gather to be together? Do you gather in the kitchen, by the television or on the front step? Talk about the places you gather in your home and have each person identify their favorite place. What does it feel like when everyone is home? What does it feel like when someone is away?

Page 5

Animal Homes

Take a walk outside and see if you can identify any animal homes. Is there an ant hill or a dog house? Is there a cocoon or a bird nest outside? When you find an animal home, talk about ways that animal grows in its home and ways the animal contributes to our world.

LEADER RESOURCE: BOOKLET PAGE 6

See [instructions for assembling the booklet](#) (included in this document).

Page 6

Home in Nature

Think about the connection between homes and the outside world. How does the particular setting of your home affect how you live? Talk about some ways that humans make their homes in nature. Think about camping and how humans are trying to live in nature. Talk about types of homes that are particularly close to nature such as cabins, igloos and tree houses.

Page 7

Establishing Homes

Talk about how your home was established. Walk around your home and think about the things that you need for a home. A place to eat, a place to rest and a place to learn are all important to family homes. What would be different and what would be the same if you lived in a different home?

LEADER RESOURCE 1: CINNAMON DOUGH RECIPE

1 cup of ground cinnamon

1 cup of smooth applesauce

white school glue, such as Elmer's glue

Gradually mix ground cinnamon into applesauce to achieve a dough-like consistency. The more watery the applesauce, the more cinnamon you will need. Add glue to thicken the mixture.

This recipe will make four to six small ornaments. When ornaments have hardened, children can glue decorations onto them.

If you make cinnamon dough ahead of time, cover tightly with plastic or seal in a plastic container to prevent drying.

LEADER RESOURCE 2: JOURNEY MEDITATION

(Once children are settled in a comfortable position, invite them to close their eyes. Read the meditation slowly, giving them time to imagine.)

You are standing on a grassy hillside looking out over a large field. You see a bunny rabbit hopping in the field and there are bumblebees visiting the flowers. A squirrel is sitting on a tree at the edge of the field chattering at you. On the other side of the field is a road. You can see the road stretching far into the horizon. You have to decide if you want to stay where you are, or take a journey on the road.

As you approach the road, you realize it is bumpy. You stop and remember the beautiful natural world behind you in the field and you wonder if you should go back. Then you realize, no matter how bumpy the road ahead is, the memory of the beautiful field will stay with you. You cross onto the road and start walking toward the future, not knowing what it is, but having faith that your memories will stay with you and you will find another beautiful place.

FIND OUT MORE

A String and A Prayer by Eleanor Wiley and Maggie Oman Shannon is a wonderful little book that tells the ancient history of beading and how beads are used in prayer.

To reinforce your own spiritual journey through Creating Home, read *Memories of God: Theological Reflections on Life* by Roberta C. Bondi (Abingdon Press, 1995), written to explain the author's personal theology and her journey toward her own faith identity. Some chapters may particularly help you process your experience as a leader in Creating Home.