

**WORLD OF WONDER**

**A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children**

**Kindergarten-1st Grade**



**BY REV. ALICE ANACHEKA-NASEMANN, PAT KAHN, AND JULIE SIMON**

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"The Grumpy Gecko" in Session 1

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### **Tapestry of Faith Core Team**

**The following UUA staff brought Tapestry to fruition:**

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Tracy L. Hurd

Sarah Gibb Millspaugh

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## PREFACE

Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* and *The Nature Principle*, said in an interview in the [March/April 2007 Orion Magazine](http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/240/) (at [www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/240/](http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/240/)):

Studies show that almost to a person conservationists or environmentalists—whatever we want to call them—had some transcendent experience in nature when they were children. For some, the epiphanies took place in a national park; for others, in the clump of trees at the end of the cul-de-sac. But if experiences in nature are radically reduced for future generations, where will stewards of the Earth come from?

We hope that Unitarian Universalist families and communities of faith will be places from which future stewards of the earth will come and that World of Wonder will be a program that inspires and nurtures children on that journey.

Loree Griffin Burns, a Unitarian Universalist and the author of *Citizen Scientist*, says:

I've been a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester (Massachusetts) for nearly fifteen years and can tell you that the people I've met and experiences I've had there have had a strong influence on my writing. My work in our religious education program truly opened me up to the idea that one way we can share difficult stories with children—particularly stories of environmental degradation—is by giving them something meaningful to do about the issues. Things they can do with their own hands in their own communities.

Children need to know they can make a difference. This program seeks to nurture their growing sense of agency to affect their world in a positive way.

# THE PROGRAM

*If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life. — Rachel Carson, 20th-century environmental activist and author*

Wonder. What is it? Where do we find it? How do we keep it? Children are born with an ability to feel wonder, and our world is full of amazing plants, animals, spaces, processes, textures, and patterns that can awaken it. But to nurture and preserve a sense of wonder, children need time to explore, observe, engage, and rest in that world. In this, children can often benefit from an adult model and guide.

This program delves deep into our Unitarian Universalist seventh Principle. It instills respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part, and appreciation of its beauty, excitement, and mystery. It is founded on the premise that direct experience in nature is essential to children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development. Time spent experiencing and exploring nature during the kindergarten and first grade years can set a pattern for the rest of children's lives, bringing lasting openness to the wonder nature can spark.

The program begins and ends with a call to go outside, and ideally, leaders will take the children outside each time the group meets. Each session offers a nature walk. Other activities can take place outside as well, such as role-play activities and crafts. For example, you can read or tell a story outside in a comfortable green space.

Stories introduce the themes of the first 15 sessions. The stories illuminate some aspect of the web of all existence: noticing the web, who and what are part of the web, enjoying the web, caring for the web. Many kinds of connections between children and nature are made explicit, while some are left for the children to discover. The program culminates in a Wonder Walk in Session 16. The program purposely avoids the doom and gloom of environmental degradation, focusing instead on the joy and wonder of nature. However, some challenges and potential solutions are presented in various sessions, particularly in Faith in Action activities.

## GOALS

This program will:

- Nurture a sense of wonder and respect for the interdependent web of all existence

- Engage children in direct experiences with the web, especially outdoors
- Promote a deep understanding of the concept of interdependence
- Teach basic environmental concepts and processes
- Provide meaningful ways in which children can positively impact and promote the health of the interdependent web.

## LEADERS

The most important qualities for leaders of this program are curiosity, joy, a sense of wonder and an ethic of stewardship and care for the environment. Leaders should seek to embody Rachel Carson's words:

If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in

The ideal teaching team of two adult co-leaders for each session will have some diversity, which might be in gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic class, theological beliefs and/or learning styles.

## PARTICIPANTS

The Wonderful Welcome program is designed for children in Kindergarten and first grade. You may find it useful to think about the range of developmental norms for this age group. In [\*Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook\*](#) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=706](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=706)) (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005), Tracey L. Hurd, Ph.D. writes that 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 also begin 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 leaders shape 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

A group can include children with a range of physical and cognitive abilities and learning styles, food allergies, and other sensitivities or limitations. Adapt activities or use alternate activities to ensure that every session is inclusive of all participants. In *World of Wonder*, some activities suggest specific 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.

As you plan your *World of Wonder* sessions, be aware of activities that might pose difficulties for children who are differently abled. All spaces, indoor and outdoor, should be accessible to everyone 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 allergies, particularly to food, and make appropriate adaptations. Let your understanding of the different learning styles in the group guide your selection of activities for each session.

A helpful resource book for inclusion in a religious education setting is [Welcoming Children with Special Needs](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=756) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=756](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=756)): *A Guidebook for Faith Communities* by Sally Patton (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004). Patton explains how working to integrate all participants helps us practice our own faith:

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

Patton continues:

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

Patton's book provides inspiration and strategies for congregations to institutionalize an inclusive faith community and internalize a spirit of justice. Consider reading this book and sharing it with congregational leadership.

## FAMILIES

The loving family unit is the primary source of spiritual nurture and religious education in a child's life. To engage parents and caregivers with their children's experience in World of Wonder, it is vital to share with them the themes of the program. Each session includes a Taking It Home section for leaders to download, customize and share with families as a handout or email. Taking It Home summarizes the session's content and provides questions and suggestions to stimulate family conversations and activities at home. In this way, parents and children may learn together. Most of the Faith in Action activities have been intentionally

designed to include families as well; the involvement of the whole family enriches the learning experience for all.

## PROGRAM STRUCTURE

All 16 sessions in World of Wonder follow the same structure. Between an opening and a closing ritual, participants engage in up to five or six activities. The opening includes a chalice-lighting and a community-building activity. Every session revolves thematically around a central story which participants hear and explore in one or more of the activities.

The sessions are presented in units.

Session Title	Unit	Story
1 The Web of Life	Interdependence	The Grumpy Gecko
2 Nature's Partnerships	Interdependence	Swimming Home
3 Thanks Be for Trees	Interdependence	Amrita's Tree
4 Balance in Our Ecosystem	Interdependence	Why the Sky Is Far Away
5 Habitats	Circles of Life	Habitat at Home
6 Life Cycles	Circles of Life	A Caterpillar Grows Up
7 Decomposition	Circles of Life	And It Is Good
8 Life-Giving Plants	Circles of Life	Naamah's Prayer for the Earth
9 Creativity in Nature	Soul of Nature	The Most Beautiful Bower in the World
10 Play in Nature	Soul of Nature	The Way of Otters
11 Kindness in Nature	Soul of Nature	The Noble Ibex: A Jataka Tale
12 Beauty in Nature	Soul of Nature	Arthur Lismer
13 Green Energy	Making a Difference	Samsa Spins Wind Power
14 Enough Stuff	Making a Difference	Low Impact Birthdays 5 R's
15 Working Together to Make a Difference	Making a Difference	UU Green Sanctuary Story
16 Using Our Sense of Wonder	Making a Difference	no story — field trip

### Faith in Action

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.

### Alternate Activities

All sessions offer alternate activities; while leading activities outdoors is preferred, indoor activities are

always provided for times when it is not feasible or possible to be outside. 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.

### **Quote**

A quote introduces 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 World of Wonder'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 time 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 Find Out More section suggests additional sources to help you, the leader, further explore the session topics.

If you are reading World of Wonder 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 will have a user-friendly document on your own computer to customize as you wish, with your own word processing program. Decide which activities



you will use, then 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. The Opening is a time for centering, both for individuals and the group. 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 "connection and interdependence." Shape an opening ritual that suits the group, works with your space limitations, and reflects the culture and practices of your congregation.

**Activities:** Up to six activities form the core content of each session. The variety of activities presented within each session addresses 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 World of Wonder to deviate from the suggested timetable!

Before your first World of Wonder session, decide which Faith in Action activities you will do over the course of the program. If possible, recruit a team of parents to help implement the Faith in Action activities. 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 independently of the World of Wonder program for a wide age span of children, or for multigenerational groups. If your congregation participates in the UUA's Green Sanctuary program, include the Green Sanctuary committee or team in helping to plan and carry out the Faith in Action activities.

**Closing:** Each session includes a closing ritual which includes a song and adding an image to the World of Wonder mural. The Closing ends the group's time

together. As you plan each session, allow plenty of time for your Closing. Avoid rushing through it.

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 community's 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. Be sure to share pertinent information with the director of religious education; the UUA's Resource Development Office also appreciates feedback on Tapestry of Faith programs.

**Taking It Home:** Taking It Home resources for each session are designed to help families extend their children's religious education experiences. You will find games, conversation topics, ideas for incorporating Unitarian Universalist rituals into the home environment, and/or online sources for the session's themes. Download Taking It Home and adapt it to reflect the actual activities your session included. You can print and copy the Taking It Home section for children to bring home, send it to all parents/caregivers as a group email, or post it on your congregation's website (or perhaps, do all three).

**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:** In a session's Resources section, you will find the full text of stories and all the artwork, handouts, and other resources you need to lead the session.

Under "Stories," you will find the full text of the session's central story and any other stories that you will need for any session activities.

Under "Handouts," you will find any material that needs to be printed and photocopied for participants to use in the session.

Under "Leader Resources," you will find all the components you need to lead the session activities. These may include a recipe, a puzzle for you to print out and cut apart; an illustration to show the group, which you can print as a hard copy or display on a computer as a PowerPoint slide, etc.

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

## LEADER GUIDELINES

As you adapt sessions to fit your resources and the needs of the group, take care to preserve the intent of a session and its purpose in the overall program.

Read each session at least several days before leading it. Get a feel for it, do a little extra research if your curiosity strikes, and follow your interests.

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

Share with co-leaders what you know about particular children's family situations and personal sensitivities as they are relevant with the day's topics. For example, if a child's family is facing homelessness and the story for the day centers on a Unitarian Universalist community's actions to combat homelessness, both you and the child may encounter an unintended learning experience.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Every congregation has its own approach to structuring religious education. You can implement the World of Wonder 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 World of Wonder 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.

Many World of Wonder 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 adapt as you wish for your space, time, and group. Remember, you are the best guide for these young learners.

These sessions can be used at any time of year. It is recommended they be used in sequence. The order of sessions and activities are designed to help participants with diverse backgrounds and learning styles deepen their learning in community.

Be aware of time and the flow of the session and the program, so you can respond to a "teachable moment" or change your plan to suit where the group is. For example, if children seem reluctant to share feelings and experiences in the group, expand the games or the artistic or musical expression activities at first, and gradually increase time for sharing insights as sessions proceed. Choose activities to meet children's need for challenge, physical activity, and fun to build a sense of community and draw children into the program.

### Session/Activity Advance Preparation

Session 1	Purchase inflatable earth ball(s). Prepare World of Wonder mural.
Session 6	Gather recycled paper egg cartons for egg carton caterpillars. Optional: If you have the opportunity and means to experience first-hand the metamorphosis of butterflies, kits can be ordered online at <a href="http://Sciencekit.com">Sciencekit.com</a> or <a href="http://Insectlore.com">Insectlore.com</a>
Session 7	Supplies for Activity 3, Earthworm Wonderland should be gathered or purchased well in advance. Recruit extra volunteers.
Session 8	Supplies for Activity 4, Starting Seedlings should be gathered or purchased in advance.
Session 9	Gather pillows, blankets, large pieces of cloth, and other materials for making child-sized "nests," and materials to decorate the nests.
Session 13	Gather supplies, and practice making pinwheel "wind turbines". Photo-sensitive paper is needed for Alternate Activity 2, Solar Art.
Session 14	Borrow recycling bins and recyclables for Activity 3, Recycle Relay. Gather recycled toilet paper rolls for Activity 5, Binoculars.
Session 16	Plan outdoor field trip well in advance.

## PRINCIPLES AND SOURCES

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote seven [Principles](http://www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml](http://www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml)):

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

## BEFORE YOU START

One of the most important goals of the World of Wonder program is for the children to engage directly with nature, thus the culminating session is designed to be a shared experience in nature, in a nearby natural area or park. Consult with the religious educator to plan all necessary arrangements for this "field trip." Extra volunteers will be needed, so you may wish to invite parents to attend with their child. The timing of the session does not include travel time, so factor that into your plans.

Internet access and the availability of a laptop can enrich sessions which offer links to videos, music, and websites. Because not all religious education programs can count on access to computers and Internet, there are always alternate activities.

This chart provides a snapshot for long-range planning.

- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Unitarian Universalism draws from many [Sources](http://www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml](http://www.uua.org/visitors/6798.shtml)):

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an

openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

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

## RESOURCES

Useful background reading for Tapestry of Faith leaders:

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

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

[\*The Gift of Faith\*](#) (at [www.uuabookstore.org/](http://www.uuabookstore.org/)): *Tending the Spiritual Lives of Children* by Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar *Second Edition* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2003)

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

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

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

Recommended environmental resources for World of Wonder:

### Books

Broda, Herbert W. *Schoolyard-Enhanced Learning: Using the Outdoors as an Instructional Tool, K-8*

Bucklin-Sporer, Arden, *How to Grow a School Garden: A Complete Guide for Parents and Teachers*

Burns, Loree Griffin. *Citizen Scientists: Be a Part of Scientific Discovery from Your Own Backyard*

Carson, Rachel. *A Sense of Wonder*

Casey, Dawn and Wilson, Anne. *Barefoot Book of Earth Tales*

Chiras, Dan. *EcoKids: Raising Children Who Care for the Earth*

Christopher, Todd. *Green Hour: A Daily Dose of Nature for Happier, Healthier, Smarter Kids*

Cornell, Joseph B. *Sharing Nature with Children* (I and II)

Gaylie, Veronica. *The Learning Garden*

Goleman, Daniel; Bennett, Lisa; and Barlow, Zenobia. *Ecoliterate: How Educators Are Cultivating Emotional, Social, and Ecological Intelligence*

Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* and *The Nature Principle: Human Restoration and the End of Nature-Deficit Disorder*

Stone, Michael K. *Smart by Nature: Schooling for Sustainability*

Ward, Jennifer. *I Love Dirt!: 52 Activities to Help You and Your Kids Discover the Wonders of Nature*

Weil, Zoe. *Above All Be Kind and Most Good, Least Harm: A Simple Principle for a Better World and Meaningful Life*

### Websites

[\*Center for Ecoliteracy\*](#) (at [www.ecoliteracy.org/](http://www.ecoliteracy.org/))

[\*Children and Nature Network\*](#) (at [www.childrenandnature.org/](http://www.childrenandnature.org/))

[\*Institute for Humane Education\*](#) (at [humaneeducation.org/](http://humaneeducation.org/))

[\*Loree Griffin Burns\*](#) (at [www.loreeburns.com/](http://www.loreeburns.com/))

[\*National Wildlife Foundation's "Green Hour" campaign\*](#) (at [www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Why-Be-Out-There/What-is-a-Green-Hour.aspx](http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Why-Be-Out-There/What-is-a-Green-Hour.aspx))

<http://www.nature.org/> (at [www.nature.org/](http://www.nature.org/))

[\*Nature Rocks\*](#) (at [www.naturerocks.org/](http://www.naturerocks.org/))

No Child Left Inside (U.S. state initiatives):

- [\*Connecticut\*](#) (at [www.ct.gov/ncli/site/default.asp](http://www.ct.gov/ncli/site/default.asp))
- [\*Maryland\*](#) (at [www.cbf.org/page.aspx?pid=687](http://www.cbf.org/page.aspx?pid=687))

- [Massachusetts](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/gpp/) (at [www.mass.gov/dcr/gpp/](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/gpp/))
- [Michigan](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10369_45551---,00.html) (at [www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10369\\_45551---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10369_45551---,00.html))

[Northwest Earth Institute](http://www.nwei.org/) (at [www.nwei.org/](http://www.nwei.org/))

[Zero Waste Home](http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com/) (at [zerowastehome.blogspot.com/](http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com/))

### **Art, Music, and Spirituality**

[Tapestry of Faith](http://www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith) (at [www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith](http://www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith)) offers two free, online supplementary resources to enrich your experience leading religious education programs: [Spirituality and the Arts in Children's Programming](http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/spiritualityand/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/spiritualityand/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/spiritualityand/index.shtml)) by Dr. Nita Penfold, and [Making Music Live](http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/makingmusic/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/makingmusic/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/makingmusic/index.shtml)) by Nick Page.

[Spirituality and the Arts in Children's Programming](http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/spiritualityand/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/spiritualityand/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/spiritualityand/index.shtml)) provides detailed guidance for

using the plastic arts in creative, spiritual ways. [Making Music Live](http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/makingmusic/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/makingmusic/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/makingmusic/index.shtml)) supports leaders of all levels of musical experience to incorporate music, especially singing, into religious education. Its chapters explain why, and how, to teach songs, even if you are not a musician.

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

## 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:

Resource Development Office  
Ministries and Faith Development  
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Boston, MA 02210-1409  
[religiouseducation@uua.org](mailto: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: THE WEB OF LIFE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*We did not weave the web of life;*

*We are merely a strand in it.*

*Whatever we do to the web,*

*We do to ourselves.*

*— attributed to Chief Seattle, chief of the  
Duwamish Nation*

This session introduces our human relationship to the earth, the basis for this program which is expressed in our seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle: respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. The concept of the interdependent web is made concrete by tangible activities, such as the creation of a World of Wonder mural which the group will use throughout the program. A story illustrates that we are all connected in a great web of life and children are encouraged in caring for the earth. An understanding of interdependence in our human communities is nurtured as participants create a group covenant, recognizing that their behaviors affect one another.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce core concepts of this program and make the concept of the interdependent web concrete
- Demonstrate that we are all part of the web of life
- Teach the idea of unity contained within diversity
- Empower participants in establishing a covenant of behavior
- Introduce the structure and rituals of the program.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn one another's names and welcome one another through participation in a name game
- Hear a story which teaches we are all connected and part of the web of life
- Make a gecko as a tangible reminder of the web of life

- Establish expected group behavior and commit to a covenant
- Learn the chalice lighting words and closing song.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	10
Activity 2: Group Covenant	10
Activity 3: Story — The Grumpy Gecko	10
Activity 4: Paper Geckos	10
Activity 5: Song — We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands	5
Faith in Action: Grounds Clean-up	30
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: Decorating the World of Wonder Mural	10
Alternate Activity 3: Spider Web Nature Walk	20
Alternate Activity 4: Beaded Geckos	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

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

- What does interdependence mean to you?
- In what ways are you connected to the web of life?
- How do you appreciate the web of life in your everyday actions?
- Is there a special place in nature where you find wonder? Something greater than yourself?

Invite your sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.



## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Optional: Poster board

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table with and a cloth.
- Write the chalice lighting words on newsprint and post in the gathering space. Optional: Use poster board to make a more durable poster of the chalice-lighting words and display it in the gathering space for the duration of the program.

#### Description of Activity

This activity introduces opening circle rituals and the themes of interdependence and the web of life.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Explain that each session starts with a ritual. Ask if anyone knows what a ritual is. You may say:

A ritual is something you do again and again, often at the same time of day. If you have a routine for going to bed, that is a kind of ritual. All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other.

Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice lighting words.

Point to the chalice lighting words you have posted, which are adapted from words by Rev. Alice Anacheke-Nasemann. Have children repeat each line after you:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

Now say:

Each time we meet for World of Wonder, we will find out more about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life.

Ask whether anyone knows what interdependence means. Say:

Interdependence means we all depend on each other and on the earth to be able to live. If we depend on each other, we need each other. We are connected to each other, as if we live on an invisible web that includes all of nature—people, animals, and plants.

#### Including All Participants

Children this age differ widely in reading ability. Point out words as you read them aloud, but do not expect children to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (10 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Obtain an inflatable globe. One source is [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and to help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help us create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]. Then, that person will gently throw the earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

#### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand

or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: GROUP COVENANT (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Post newsprint where the children can easily see it. Write "Our Covenant" across the top.
- Optional: If this group has already established a covenant, make sure it is posted in the meeting space. Rather than create a new covenant, use this time to remind the children of their existing covenant and point out the connection between covenants and interdependence, as guided below.

### Description of Activity

In this activity, children take responsibility for helping to determine what behavior is expected in the group. All participants and leaders agree to abide by the covenant. Note: If your group has already established a covenant you may wish to skip this activity and simply point out the covenant you have agreed to and the connection covenants have to interdependence as described below.

Gather the group in a circle. Explain:

"Interdependence" means that what one person does affects everyone around them.

Ask:

- What would happen if one person in the room started throwing things?
- How about if someone was giving out candy?

Explain that the group is going to create a covenant to say how we will treat each other. Tell the children a covenant is a promise and the covenant they create will be a promise everyone in the group, including the leaders, will make about how they will treat each other. If your congregation has a covenant, tell the children.

Invite the children to make suggestions about what they would like as a part of their covenant. As needed, offer ideas, such as taking turns, sharing, being kind, listening to one another, etc. Whenever possible use phrases that promote positive behavior rather than banning inappropriate behaviors. For example, instead "no hitting," say "treat everyone gently and kindly." Write the ideas on the newsprint.

When you have a covenant that everyone agrees to, have each person sign their first name on the bottom of the covenant. Tell the group that by signing the

covenant they are promising to do what it says. For the duration of the program, if a participant behaves in a way that is inconsistent with the covenant, leaders can point to the covenant and remind the child that they are not living up to their promise, redirecting them toward the appropriate behavior.

Save the covenant in your religious education space to display each time the group meets.

### Including All Participants

As needed, help children write their names.

## ACTIVITY 3: STORY — THE GRUMPY GECKO (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[The Grumpy Gecko](#)" (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as a toy gecko, tiger, or other character in the story, or pictures of a jungle
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Leader Resource 1, [Fidget Basket](#) (included in this document) and materials suggested

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions and choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story in World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, tell or read the story, "The Grumpy Gecko." If needed, explain what a gecko is before you begin.

- When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion using questions such as:
- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- The Grumpy Gecko saw how he was connected to and depended on many living things in the jungle. He saw how he fit into a small part of interdependent web of life. Can you think of something living in nature that you are connected to and depend on? How about something not living in nature?
- Do you ever wish it would stop raining?
- Do we really want all living creatures in the web of life? Even mosquitos?
- The gecko gets its food by sticking out its tongue. But most of us get our food from a grocery store. Suppose you had a glass of milk. Can you think of some connections that are needed to get milk? [Milk, cow, grass, sun, rain.]
- How can we, as Unitarians Universalists, help care for the web of life?

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 4: PAPER GECKOS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Construction paper, several colors
- Glue sticks
- Scissors, including left-handed pairs
- Handout 1, [Paper Gecko Template](#), or draw your own gecko
- Optional: Crayons or markers
- Optional: "Googly eyes"

### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether to pre-cut construction paper squares or have children do the cutting.
- Make copies of the gecko template, one for each participant and some extras.

### Description of Activity

The children will make their own paper gecko to remind them of the interdependence of the gecko on seemingly unrelated things.

Give each participant a copy of Handout 1, Paper Gecko Template. Have each child cut squares of different colors of construction paper and glue onto the template (or use pre-cut squares). Have extra gecko templates available for those children who wish to color the gecko. Use the eyes found on the template or have "googly eyes" available to glue onto the gecko.

## ACTIVITY 5: SONG — WE'VE GOT THE WHOLE WORLD IN OUR HANDS (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 3, "[We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands](#)" Lyrics (included in this document)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Optional: Computer with Internet access, or a recording of the song
- 

### Preparation for Activity

- Learn the song so you can teach it from memory. Or, invite a guest song leader to teach the song.

- Write the lyrics for the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands" on poster board. Display near the closing circle.
- Optional: View this [YouTube video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Bmp9HykJqk&feature=related) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Bmp9HykJqk&feature=related](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Bmp9HykJqk&feature=related)) to get ideas for hand motions the group might want to use. Test computer and Internet access, and queue the video to show the children.

### Description of Activity

Participants learn a song they will sing in each session Closing.

Say, in these words or your own:

Each time we meet, we will sing a song about caring for the earth during our closing circle. Singing together is a good way for us to feel a connection with each other. I wonder if anyone already knows the tune for the song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands"?

If using the video, show it to the group, inviting them to sing along if they already know the song. Tell the children they will be invited to add new verses and motions to this song each time they meet.

Teach the song by singing one phrase at a time, with hand motions, and having participants sing the phrase back to you. Then put the phrases together and sing the whole song.

## CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Creating the World of Wonder Mural](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 3, ["We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands" Lyrics](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 4, [Mural Image — Gecko](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Using Leader Resource 2 as a guide, create the World of Wonder mural. Choose a display location you will be able to keep for the duration of the program and one you can easily reach to add to the mural in future sessions. Before making the mural, decide whether you will have the children decorate it (Alternate Activity 2); if you will, you will need a bigger mural.

- Familiarize yourself with the song provided on Leader Resource 3, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." You can hear the traditional spiritual on which it is based, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Bmp9HykJqk&feature=related) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Bmp9HykJqk&feature=related](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Bmp9HykJqk&feature=related)).
- Print Leader Resource 4, Mural Image — Gecko. If possible, print in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Optional: Write the lyrics from Leader Resource 3 on newsprint in large letters, and post. Leave room at the bottom for lyrics you will add in future sessions. Post the newsprint where it can remain for the duration of this program.

### Description of Activity

Gather in a circle and say, in these words or your own:

Today we learned that all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life. We all need each other to live. We are all part of the interdependent web of life.

Display the mural and say:

This is our World of Wonder mural. As Unitarian Universalists, we believe it is very important to take care of the web of life so that all of the animals and plants and people can live. Each time we are together, we will add something to the web. Today, we add a picture of a gecko to remind us of our connections to the earth and with each other until we are together next time.

Participants learn a song they will sing in each session Closing.

Say, in these words or your own:

Each time we meet, we will sing a song about caring for the earth during our closing circle. Singing together is a good way for us to feel a connection with each other. I wonder if anyone already knows the tune for the song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands?"

If using the video, show it to the group, inviting them to sing along if they already know the song. Tell the children they will be invited to add new verses and motions to this song each time they meet.

Teach the song by singing one phrase at a time, with hand motions from the video or from your imagination. Have participants sing the phrase back to you. Then put the phrases together and sing the whole song.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: GROUNDS CLEAN-UP (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 3, "[We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands](#)" Lyrics (included in this document)
- Trash bags and/or recycle barrels
- Disposable plastic or latex gloves
- Optional: Rakes or other seasonal yard tools

### Preparation for Activity

- Consult with your congregational leadership and staff to determine an appropriate location on the grounds that the children can clean up. If the congregation participates in the [UUA Green Sanctuary](#) (at [www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml)) program, invite members of that committee to participate in this and future Faith in Action activities.
- Determine when the clean-up will take place and communicate your plan to parents and the congregation.

### Description of Activity

Throughout this program participants will learn how to help care for the Earth. In this activity, participants will begin their work locally in a familiar place, cleaning up the grounds.

Bring children to the designated area and explain that cleaning up and taking care of our yards is one way we take care of the Earth. Invite them to help clean up all litter. Point out that litter is not healthy for animals and birds. As appropriate, they can help remove weeds, rake or otherwise tend the grounds.

When you are finished, gather briefly in a circle. Go around the circle and have each participant complete the following sentence: "Today I helped take care of the Earth by..."

Close by singing "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

### Including All Participants

Be certain the area you select is accessible for all.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help in this area?
- How was the timing? What needs to change for a session to work better within our timeframe?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

We did not weave the web of life;

We are merely a strand in it.

Whatever we do to the web,

We do to ourselves

— attributed to Chief Seattle, chief of the Duwamish Nation

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we heard the story, "The Grumpy Gecko," which showed that all living beings on the Earth are connected on a great invisible web of life. We talked about our seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, respect for the interdependent web of which we are all a part, and how our group is also an interdependent web. We created a covenant, or promises to each other for our time together, recognizing that what one person does affects the whole web. We added a picture of a gecko to our World of Wonder mural to remind us that we are all connected.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER.** Talk about the ways in which your family is part of the interdependent web of life. Discuss the ways members of a family are interdependent and the ways individuals in a family influence one another.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER.** Create a family covenant. Most families have explicit rules, as well as



many that go unspoken. Set some time aside to identify behaviors that help the family thrive. List the promises you are all willing to keep and have each member of the family sign the covenant. Try to state your expectations in positive terms rather than negative. For example, instead of saying "Don't be selfish," you can say, "Be generous." Empower all members of the family to be keepers of the covenant and point out when it has been broken. If you like, work together to create a list of apology actions, such as apologizing, giving a hug, fixing something, or giving someone some space. You can use these actions to help make things right after a transgression. For an example, see the "Family Pledge of Non-Violence" on the [Parenting for Peace and Justice](http://www.ipj-ppj.org/Families.htm) (at [www.ipj-ppj.org/Families.htm](http://www.ipj-ppj.org/Families.htm)) website.

**A Family Adventure.** Go on a "web walk" early in the morning to find as many spider webs glistening with dew as you can. Notice how intricate they are. How are they like the invisible web of all life that people are a part of?

**Family Discovery.** Watch nature shows such as "Planet Earth" on PBS, Netflix, or DVD. Subscribe to nature magazines like [National Wildlife Federation's](http://www.nwf.org/) (at [www.nwf.org/](http://www.nwf.org/)) Big Backyard or Ranger Rick; even small donations to [Sierra Club](http://www.sierraclub.org) (at [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)) and other organizations usually bring high quality nature magazines to your door. Talk about the interdependence that exists between different animals and plants you learn about. What links can you observe?

**A Family Game.** Create a web together with a ball of yarn, as the group did in today's session.

**A Family Ritual.** Practice a gratitude bedtime ritual in which you take turns naming different animals and plants. Say thank you to each living being for a way it is important in the web of life and in your life. Optional: Extend the ritual to include people.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.
- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.
2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.

Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: DECORATING THE WORLD OF WONDER MURAL (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 2, [Creating the World of Wonder Mural](#) (included in this document)
- Yarn, glue, and nature stickers (e.g. spiders, other insects, flowers, various animals)
- Optional: Digital camera, a printer, and scissors

### Preparation for Activity

- Using Leader Resource 2, sketch the web on mural paper. Make it large enough for children to glue yarn on the "spokes" of the web, and paste stickers—and photos, if you will take and print them—in between.
- Cut yarn into lengths for the "spokes" of the web.
- Lay out sheets of stickers.
- Optional: Ask your religious educator whether it is permissible to post children's pictures on the mural. If any of the children's pictures cannot be posted, skip the picture-taking.

## Description of Activity

Place the mural on a work surface that is accessible to all participants. Take a picture of each participant, including leaders. If equipment is available to print the pictures immediately, cut pictures out and attach to the web with glue. Otherwise, pictures can be added in the next session and any time there is a newcomer to the group. While pictures are being taken, the children can glue lengths of yarn onto the mural to create the "spokes" of the web and decorate it with nature stickers.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: SPIDER WEB NATURE WALK (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Paper lunch bags, one per child
- Optional: Flashlights, magnifying glasses, or handheld dental mirrors
- Optional: "[All God's Creatures... Even the Bat](http://www.uua.org/families/uworld), (at [www.uua.org/families/uworld](http://www.uua.org/families/uworld))" Fall 2012 *UU World* Family pages

### Preparation for Activity

- Communicate with families in advance and inform them of the plan to spend time outdoors. Arrange transportation, permission slips, sunscreen, insect repellent, water, and appropriate clothing.
- Select a location for the nature walk in consultation with the religious educator.
- Make sure the walk will be safe for all. Learn about any poisonous varieties of spiders that exist in your area and how to avoid them. Determine whether anyone is allergic to bee stings, pollen, or other outdoor allergens and plan accordingly.
- Optional: Take a look at the Fall 2012 [UU World Family pages](http://www.uua.org/re/families/153856.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/re/families/153856.shtml](http://www.uua.org/re/families/153856.shtml)). This magazine insert's theme is the fascinating, unusual, and sometimes repellent creatures in our world and our attitudes toward them. You will find reflections and activities to enhance this session, and a story, "Why Bat Has No Friends," you might choose to tell outdoors on this nature walk.

### Description of Activity

Go for a nature walk to seek evidence of the web of life. Encourage children to notice the different plants, insects, and animals you see along the way. Talk about ways these living things interact and depend on one another. If you find spider webs, look at them with your

flashlights, magnifying lenses, and dental mirrors. Point out how intricate, beautiful, and delicate they are. Teach the children to treat them gently and leave them untouched so the spiders can catch their food. Encourage gentleness with any creatures and plants you encounter. Invite participants to place any interesting non-living items they find in their paper bags, such as acorns, stones, or leaves. When you return from the walk, invite children to share the items they collected. Discuss how these items connect with the living things on the interconnected web.

### Including All Participants

If a child is afraid of spiders, allow the child to establish their distance from them; do not push a child to get closer than is comfortable. Reassure the child that the spiders you are looking at are not poisonous and will not bother people unless we scare or hurt them. Model calm and fascination.

Find out about any relevant allergies among the children (e.g., bee stings or pollen) and plan accordingly. If any participant uses a wheelchair or has limited mobility, limit the walk to a fully accessible outdoor location (e.g., paved paths).

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: BEADED GECKOS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Beads
- Cord or yarn
- Handout 2, [Beaded Geckos](#)

### Preparation for Activity

- Practice making a gecko so that you can lead the activity.
- Recruit some extra adults or teens to help out.
- Optional: [view video](#) (5:45).

### Description of Activity

The children will make their own beaded gecko to remind them of the interdependence of the gecko on seemingly unrelated things.

Give each participant a copy of Handout 2, Beaded Geckos. Have each child select beads and using the instructions on Handout 2, guide the children through the steps. If possible, recruit some extra adults or teens to help out.

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 1: STORY: THE GRUMPY GECKO

Adapted from "The Grumpy Gecko" in [The Barefoot Book of Earth Tales](#) by Dawn Casey and Anne Wilson (Cambridge: Barefoot Books, 2009). Used by permission.

In a shady glade, the chief of the jungle slept. Until,  
*GECK-O! GECK-O! GECK-O!*

Tiger woke up with a snort. He opened one yellow eye. "Gecko," he growled. "What do you want? It's the middle of the night."

"I've come to complain..."

What could Gecko the lizard have to complain about? He spent most of his time lazing around, just sleeping and eating. Even when he was hungry, all he had to do was flick out his sticky tongue and lick up a mosquito.

"What's troubling you?" Tiger asked.

"It's the fireflies!" said Gecko. "All night long they fly around, flashing their lights in my eyes, keeping me awake... flashing and flickering... I haven't slept for days. It's making me very grumpy. You're the chief of the jungle. Make them stop."

Tiger stifled a gigantic yawn. "I'll talk to the fireflies," he promised Gecko.

Tiger sighed and set off to find the fireflies.

Wading through wet paddy fields, the night vibrated with the chirps and croaks of frogs and the trills of a million insects.

Above the paddies, the fireflies flickered and flashed.

"Fireflies," Tiger called, "Gecko says you have been disturbing his sleep, flashing and flickering all night long. Is this true?"

"Well, we do flash our lights all night," replied the fireflies, "but we don't want to disturb anyone! We're just passing on Woodpecker's message. We heard him drumming out a warning."

"I see," said Tiger. "Then I'll talk to Woodpecker."

At the edge of the paddies, Tiger found Woodpecker drumming against a coconut palm. Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat.

"Woodpecker!" Tiger winced. "The fireflies say you have been rapping and tapping, tapping and rapping, drumming out a warning. Is this true?"

"Of course," said Woodpecker, puffing up his feathers. "I provide a great service. Clearly, my efforts are not

appreciated." He looked down his long beak at Tiger. "Beetle rolls manure right across the path. I warn the jungle animals so that no one steps in it. Without my drumming, who knows what a mess you'd all be in?"

"Oh," said Tiger. "Well, that's very helpful. Thank you."

Tiger licked his nose thoughtfully. "I'll go speak to Beetle."

It was easy to spot Beetle on the jungle path. In the moonlight, his back gleamed like polished metal.

"What's all this?" Tiger asked. "Woodpecker says you're rolling filthy mess all over the place?"

"Yes, yes, can't stop," Beetle replied, rolling a ball of dung right up to Tiger's paw. "Water Buffalo drops piles of it all over the path. If I don't move some away, there'll be muck everywhere! 'Scuse me..."

Tiger lifted his paw and Beetle bustled past.

"OK," said Tiger, suppressing a sigh. "Thank you, Beetle. I'll go and see Buffalo."

Tiger found Buffalo asleep in a pool of mud.

"Buffalo," Tiger roared.

"Beetle says you have been leaving your manure all over the path. Is this true?"

"Oh yes, Sir," said Buffalo, lowering his head. "I leave manure all over the path, Sir. But you see, Sir, it's helpful, Sir. Rain washes holes in the path every afternoon. I leave manure only to fill up the holes, so that no one trips or falls. If I didn't, Sir, someone could get hurt."

"I see," said Tiger. "Well, that's very thoughtful of you, Buffalo."

Tiger's tail twitched. He was beginning to lose patience. He sighed. "I'll go ahead and hear what Rain has to say."

Tiger set off for Mount Agung, the highest peak on the island, and the home of Rain.

Tiger climbed and he climbed and he climbed.

He climbed through jungle, woodland and scrub and then he climbed some more.

At last, his claws clattered onto the smooth grass of the mountain peak. He stopped to catch his breath. He looked down the mountain.

The sun was rising. Tiger stared.

Jungle spread out for miles around, flamboyant with flowers. Wild orchids and climbing lilies, trumpets of violet-blue and starbursts of brilliant flame-red.

Tiger sniffed. He smelt jasmine, ylang-ylang, frangipani.



He swiveled his ears. He heard newborn streams trickling and tinkling.

And below the jungle, on the green-gold steps of the paddy fields, he could just make out the faint flicker and flash of the fireflies.

"No need to ask why Rain rains," Tiger smiled.

He cooled his paws in a stream and watched for a while. He watched the water journey from mountain to sea, sustaining every living thing on its way, even the tiniest mosquito.

Tiger plunged his muzzle into the clear fresh water and drank.

Then he began the long journey down the mountain and through the forests and jungles and paddies to find Gecko.

It was dusk by the time Tiger found the lizard again.

"Well?" Gecko demanded. "Did you talk to the fireflies? They're still flashing and flickering, on and on. Did you tell them to stop?"

"Gecko," said Tiger. He sat down on his haunches and spoke very slowly. "Listen carefully. The fireflies flash to pass on Woodpecker's warning. Woodpecker warns everyone not to step in beetle's dung. Beetle clears up the excess dung left by Buffalo. Buffalo leaves manure on the path to fill up the holes made by rain. Rain makes holes in the path as he creates streams and lakes and puddles—puddles where mosquitoes live."

"Oh," said Gecko.

"Gecko, what do you eat?"

"Mosquitoes," said Gecko.

"So..." said Tiger.

"So..." repeated Gecko slowly.

"Yes..."

"If Rain stopped raining..."

"Yes..."

"Buffalo could stop filling holes..."

"Uh-huh..."

"And beetle could stop rolling dung..."

"Yes..."

"And Woodpecker could stop drumming..."

"Mmm..."

"And the fireflies could stop flashing..."

"Yes, Gecko..."

"But... I would have nothing to eat."

"Exactly," said Tiger. "Gecko, everything in this world is connected. Go and live in peace with the fireflies."

So Gecko stuck himself upside down, underneath the branch of a tree. He closed his eyes. He went to sleep.

The fireflies flickered and flashed.

Tiger snored.

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 1: HANDOUT 1: PAPER GECKO TEMPLATE**

From the “Gecko Scissor Skills Craft” by Leanne Guenther found on [DTLK's Crafts for Kids website](#).

For use in Activity 4, Paper Geckos.

1. Print the instructions and the gecko template from the “Gecko Scissor Skills Craft” by Leanne Guenther found on [DTLK's Crafts for Kids website](#).
2. Make a copy the template for each child.
3. Decide whether to have the children cut the pieces or have adults cut them ahead of time.

# **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 1:**

## **HANDOUT 2: BEADED GECKOS**

Posted by [Iceman1987](#) on the Hub website; permission pending.

For use in Alternate Activity 4, Beaded Geckos.

For each gecko:

1. Cut 4 feet of ribbon
2. Run ribbon through the bottom of the lanyard hook, and tie a simple knot.
3. Run ribbon in opposite directions through the beads, following the pattern shown.

Note: Feet are tricky. After completing the two beads after the eyes (4th row), add two more body-color beads on both sides. Then add three feet-color beads to each side, and string back through the two body-color beads. Then, continue on with normal threading with ribbon alternating sides as you go.

4. At the end of the gecko's tail, tie a double knot to finish!

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 1:**

### **LEADER RESOURCE 1: FIDGET BASKET**

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

Provide a basket for fidget objects. Fill it with pipe cleaners, Wiki Stix (TM), Tangles (TM), and other quiet manipulatives.

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

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

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 1: LEADER RESOURCE 2: CREATING THE WORLD OF WONDER MURAL

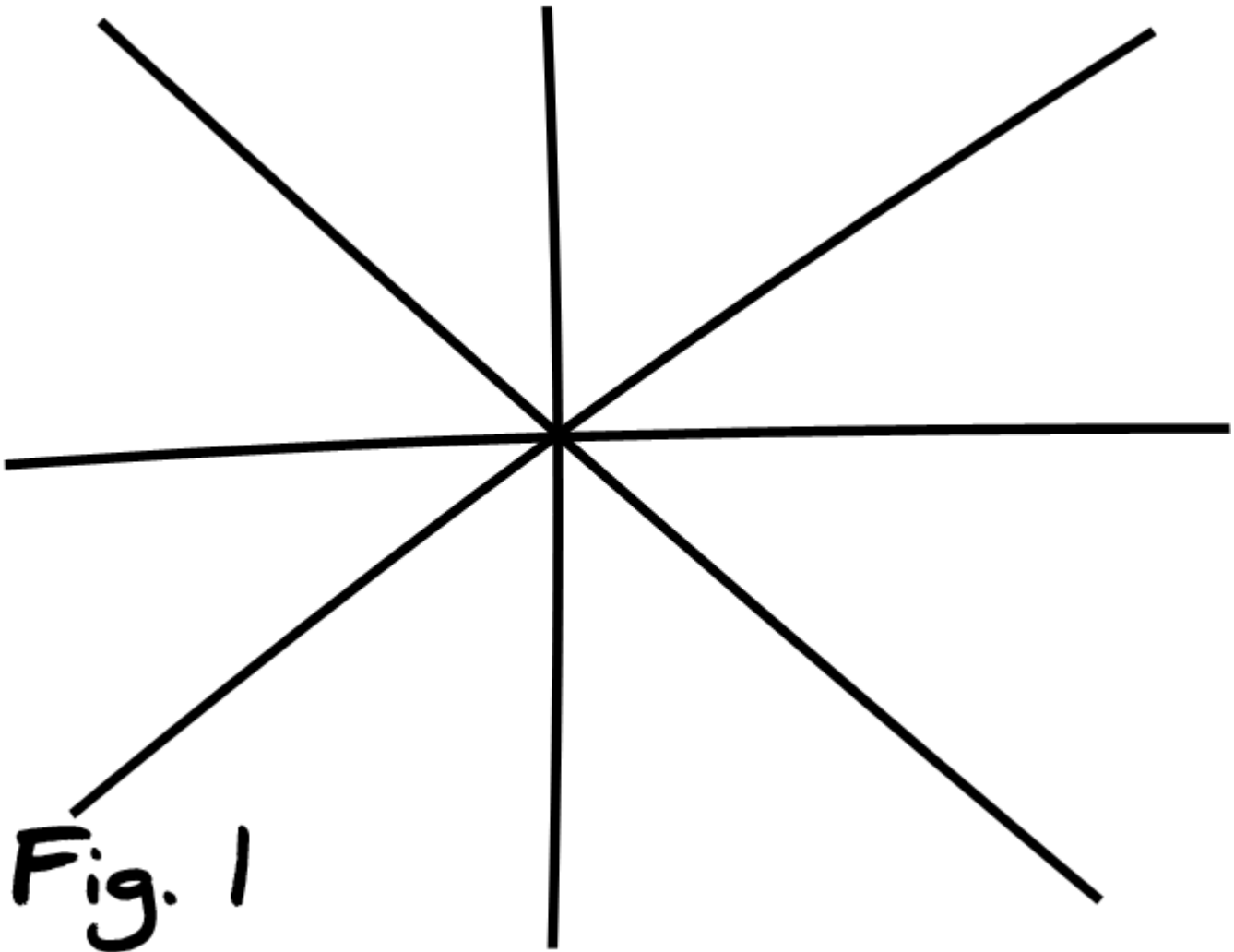
Download a [high-resolution PDF](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/wonder/mural.pdf) (at [www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/wonder/mural.pdf](http://www.uua.org/documents/tapestry/wonder/mural.pdf)) for printing.

*In each session's Closing, you will add an image to the World of Wonder mural, illustrating the web of life of which we are a part. This web can be a semi-permanent creation in your room or attached to a bulletin board or other removable object. Customize it to fit your space needs.*

*Draw a simple web on mural paper or create one with a large ball of yarn, ribbon, or string glued or taped to mural paper or to a large piece of felt.*

*Before you create your web, see Alternate Activity 2, Decorating the World of Wonder Mural. Decide whether and how the children will contribute to the mural, and plan accordingly.*

Draw a horizontal and vertical line. Then add two diagonal lines to form the framework of the web (Figure 1). Finish the web by connecting the lines around the framework (Figure 2).



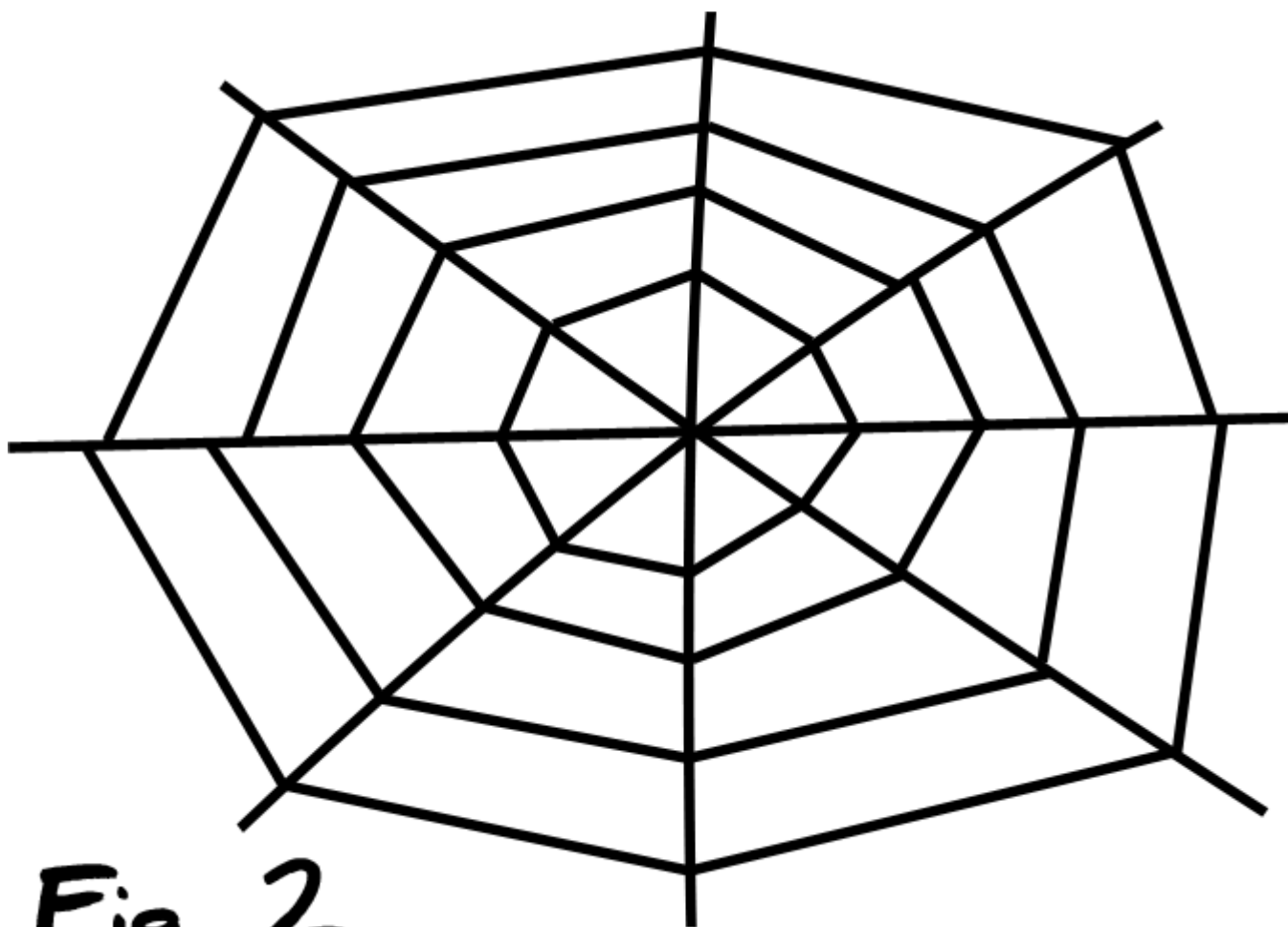


Fig. 2

# **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 1:**

## **LEADER RESOURCE 3: "WE'VE GOT THE WHOLE WORLD IN OUR HANDS"**

### **LYRICS**

Based on the traditional American Christian spiritual "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands."

We've got the whole world in our hands.

We've got the whole world in our hands.

We've got the whole world in our hands.

We've got the whole world in our hands.

We've got the rivers and the oceans, in our hands (repeat 3x)

We've got the trees and the flowers, in our hands (repeat 3x)

We've got the air we breathe, in our hands (repeat 3x)

We've got the whales and the dolphins, in our hands (repeat 3x)

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 1: LEADER RESOURCE 4: MURAL IMAGE — GECKO**

An image of a Gold Dust Day gecko from [Wikipedia](#).





## FIND OUT MORE

[Hear the call of a gecko](http://www.soundboard.com/sb/Gecko_Sounds.aspx) (at [www.soundboard.com/sb/Gecko\\_Sounds.aspx](http://www.soundboard.com/sb/Gecko_Sounds.aspx)) on the Soundboard website.

Learn how Unitarian Universalists are involved in taking care of the Earth:

[Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/))

[The Green Sanctuary Program](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml))

# SESSION 2: NATURE'S PARTNERSHIPS

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Your deepest roots are in nature. No matter who you are, where you live, or what kind of life you lead, you remain irrevocably linked with the rest of creation. — Charles Cook, founder and director of [Wild Earth Adventures](http://wildearthadventures.com/books.htm) (at [wildearthadventures.com/books.htm](http://wildearthadventures.com/books.htm))*

This session introduces the importance of partnerships in the web of life. A story about partnership between sea anemones and clown fish demonstrates that helping one another is an aspect of interdependence. Children experience the benefits of partnership by working together cooperatively. Participants are introduced to leadership roles they will take on over the course of the program.

The Faith in Action activity invites participants to learn more about one of nature's partnerships and ways they can take action to support it.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce partnership as an important aspect of the interdependent web of life
- Demonstrate the complexity of relationships in the natural world
- Build trust and cooperation in the group
- Empower participants as leaders in the group
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Perform leadership tasks
- Learn about and identify unusual animal partnerships

- Identify partnerships in their own lives
- Work cooperatively.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Introducing the Leadership Chart	10
Activity 3: Story — Swimming Home	10
Activity 4: Sea Anemone and Clown Fish Partner Game	10
Activity 5: Nature's Partnership Puppets	15
Faith in Action: Help the Honeybees	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: Nature Walk	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

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

- What partnerships are important in your life?
- In what ways are you in partnership on the web of life? To what or whom in nature or in human relations are you a partner?

Allow your own sense of reverence, wonder and awe to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Optional: Poster board
- Group Covenant from Session 1
- Newsprint or poster with Chalice-Lighting Words from Session 1

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice Lighting Words.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the themes of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice lighting words.

Invite a volunteer to light the chalice and lead the chalice lighting words. As needed, assist the volunteer.

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

— adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant created in Session 1 and briefly review it with the group. Invite any newcomers to sign their name.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we will talk about partnership. We will discover how partnerships are important in the web of life.

Ask what the children think partnership means. Affirm that partnership is when two or more people or animals work together to get something done.

#### Including All Participants

Children this age differ widely in reading ability. Point out words as you read them aloud, but do not expect children to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]. Then, that person will gently throw the earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

#### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the

ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: INTRODUCING THE LEADERSHIP CHART (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Creating the Leadership Chart](#) (included in this document)
- Poster board, card stock, markers, adhesive Velcro tape (available at hardware and craft stores) and scissors
- Optional: Laminator for poster board, and dry erase markers in place of card stock

### Preparation for Activity

- Together with your co-leaders and religious educator, determine which leadership roles and tasks to include (see Leader Resource 1 for ideas).
- Make the Leadership Chart and name tags, following instructions on Leader Resource 1.

### Description of Activity

Sharing in leadership roles empowers children as partners in their group. In future sessions, the Leadership Chart and role assignments will be part of the Opening.

Gather the group in a circle. Indicate the Leadership Chart and tell the children they will take turns being leaders. Briefly describe the roles and tasks. Assign jobs randomly or by soliciting volunteers. Explain that each time you meet, the jobs will change. Anyone who did not get a job today will have one during another session.

## ACTIVITY 3: STORY — SWIMMING HOME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Swimming Home](#)" (included in this document)
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as a book about the ocean, plastic fish, pictures of a sea anemone and a clown fish
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions and choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, tell or read the story, "Swimming Home."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion using questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- I wonder if you know about any other partnerships in nature.
- I wonder how we help each other in this group.

- Can you think of any ways that people in this congregation have worked together?
- I wonder, have you ever had a partner help you do something you couldn't do?
- Have you ever helped someone else do something they couldn't do?
- How can we as Unitarian Universalists be partners with the animals and plants in the web of life?

#### **Including All Participants**

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

### **ACTIVITY 4: SEA ANEMONE AND CLOWN FISH PARTNER GAME (10 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Optional: Ocean sounds CD and CD player

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Find a space large enough for children to run around, outdoors if possible.

#### **Description of Activity**

This activity reinforces the concept of partnership with an active game that is effective for kinesthetic learners.

Form two groups: sea anemones and clown fish. Referencing the story, remind them that sea anemones and clown fish have a special partnership. Instruct the sea anemones to stand still and wiggle their fingers above their heads like tentacles. Ask the participants what they remember about the tentacles and remind them as necessary that the tentacles are poisonous and they keep most fish away from sea anemones. Tell the clown fish that they will pretend to swim around the space. When you call out "big fish," the clown fish need to swim "back" to their sea anemone partners to be safe. Select a volunteer to act as the "big fish," trying to catch the clown fish before they reach safety.

Play the game for a couple of rounds. Then have participants switch roles. When you are finished, process the game with questions such as:

- What did it feel like when you heard the words, "big fish?"
- What did it feel like to be the Clown Fish?
- What did it feel like to be the Sea Anemone?
- Can you think of any partnerships that are important in your life?

#### **Including All Participants**

If any children in your group are sensitive to sensory stimulation, you can adapt the game by instructing the children to swim without making any sound. You can also slow the game down by having participants walk when they "swim," rather than run.

### **ACTIVITY 5: NATURE'S PARTNERSHIP PUPPETS (15 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- Leader Resource 2, [Nature's Partnerships Key](#) (included in this document)
- Handout 1-8, [Nature's Partnerships](#) (included in this document)
- Wooden craft sticks, glue, and scissors, including left-handed scissors

#### **Preparation for Activity**

- Print Leader Resource 2, one copy per leader. Read the descriptions and select a few partnerships to discuss with the group.
- Copy Handout 1-8, Nature's Partnerships, at least one per participant.

#### **Description of Activity**

By creating and playing with puppets, participants explore the concept of partnerships.

Distribute Handout 1-8, Nature's Partnerships. Use Leader Resource 2, Nature's Partnerships Key, to tell the children about the partnerships you selected. Tell the children to create puppets by cutting out the partnership pairs and gluing them to craft sticks

Invite the children to enjoy free play with the puppets. Encourage them to create puppet shows that demonstrate the animal partnerships. If you have time, invite children to share their puppet show with the others.

If time allows, process the activity:

- I wonder if any of the partnerships surprised you or are especially interesting to you.
- Have you ever been someone's partner?

### **CLOSING (5 MINUTES)**

#### **Materials for Activity**

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 3, [Mural Image — Clown Fish](#) (included in this document) , and tape

- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 3, Mural Image — Clown Fish. If possible, print in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder Mural created in Session 1.
- Display the newsprint with lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

### Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we learned that animals and plants of different species can help each other in interesting ways by forming partnerships. Unitarian Universalists believe all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like the web of our mural. Each time we meet we add something new to the World of Wonder mural; today we add a sea anemone and clown fish to remind us of the importance of nature's partnerships.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the Song Leader to start the song, with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: HELP THE HONEYBEES

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Copies of [The Bee Book](#) (at [www.helpthehoneybees.com/downloads/BeeBookFINAL.zip](http://www.helpthehoneybees.com/downloads/BeeBookFINAL.zip))
- Optional: Closing Song Lyrics (Session 1)
- Optional: Video and/or still cameras

### Preparation for Activity

- Review the [Help the Honeybees](#) (at [www.helpthehoneybees.com](http://www.helpthehoneybees.com)) website and choose activities for the event. Download and print copies of [The Bee Book](#) (at

[www.helpthehoneybees.com/downloads/BeeBookFINAL.zip](http://www.helpthehoneybees.com/downloads/BeeBookFINAL.zip)) from the Haagen-Dazs company.

- Consult with your religious educator to choose a day and time for the gathering.
- Inform families of event plans and invite members of your congregation to attend. Note: If the congregation participates in UUA's [Green Sanctuary](#) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) program, invite members of that committee to help plan and implement this activity.
- If you plan to take photographs or video, ask your religious educator for a permission form you can have participants sign at the event.

### Description of Activity

One nature partnerships is the honey bee and the flower. Families and the wider congregation may not be aware of the current honey bee crisis in the United States. The ice cream brand Haagen-Dazs has created an interactive website explaining the importance of honey bees as well as actions that can be taken to help. Choose activities that will work well for your group or congregation. Examples include:

- View the video of high school students performing a "waggle dance" and invite all ages to participate in the dance
- Have an ice cream tasting. Contact Haagen-Dazs or a local ice cream vendor for donations.
- Provide copies of The Bee Book. Select pages to share, such as the fact sheets or word search.
- Invite a local beekeeper to give a talk, or arrange a trip to local hives.
- Recruit volunteers to help with the event, and ask some to take pictures.

During the event, have volunteers take photographs or video to share with the children at a later time. Close the event with these words, or your own:

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe it is important to take care of all of the living beings in the web of life because we are all connected to each other. What happens to the honey bees matters to us all.

Have the children lead the song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the participants to add verses such as "bees and the flowers in our hands" and corresponding motions.

Share photos or video of the event with the children in a subsequent session.



## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help?
- How was the timing? What needs to change for a session to work better within our time frame?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

Your deepest roots are in nature. No matter who you are, where you live, or what kind of life you lead, you remain irrevocably linked with the rest of creation. — Charles Cook, founder and director of [Wild Earth Adventures](http://wildearthadventures.com/books.htm) (at [wildearthadventures.com/books.htm](http://wildearthadventures.com/books.htm))

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we learned about some interesting partnerships in nature, discussing how very different creatures can be helpful to one another. We played an active game in which participants pretended to be sea anemones and clown fish, working together in partnerships. We created and played with Nature's Partnerships puppets. We added a sea anemone and a clown fish to our World of Wonder mural and sang "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** partnerships in your family and congregation. Are there times when you work as a team? What is easier about having a partner? Are there times when having a partner makes things harder? What makes someone a "good" or helpful partner? Are there things you can do together with your family or your congregation that you would not be able to do alone?

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...**

**A Family Adventure.** Help keep the ocean clean for clown fish and sea anemones by volunteering for the international coastal clean-up, described on the [Ocean Conservancy](http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/international-coastal-cleanup-11.html) (at [www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/international-coastal-cleanup-11.html](http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/international-coastal-cleanup-11.html)) website. If you do not live near the ocean, volunteer to help clean up a local river or lake. A good book to read together about trash and the oceans is *Tracking Trash: Flotsam, Jetsam, and the Science of Ocean Motion* by [Unitarian Universalist Loree Griffin Burns](http://www.loreeburns.com/) (at [www.loreeburns.com/](http://www.loreeburns.com/)).

**Family Discovery.** With your child, search online for the terms "animal partnerships," "mutualism," and "symbiosis." (You can also contrast these with parasitism, in which one animal benefits but another is harmed.) Print out pictures of partnerships in nature. Create a partnership mural.

**A Family Ritual.** Foster awareness of the ways each family member contributes to the well-being of the family. Begin a dinnertime ritual in which each person takes a turn naming something they did during the day to help someone else in the family, and expresses gratitude to another family member for the help they provided during the day.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.
- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.
2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.

Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: NATURE WALK (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Lunch-sized paper bags, cloth bags, or small baggies, one per child
- Optional: Flashlights, magnifying glasses, or handheld dental mirrors

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Inform families of your plan to bring the children outdoors. Arrange all necessary details, such as transportation, permission slips, sunscreen, insect repellent, and appropriate clothing.
- Select an appropriate location for your nature walk in consultation with the religious educator.
- Make sure you can recognize poison ivy. Learn about any venomous or otherwise dangerous creatures in your local habitat and how to avoid them.
- Determine whether anyone is allergic to bee stings, pollen, or other outdoor allergens and plan accordingly.

### **Description of Activity**

This activity invites participants to experience nature directly.

Go on a nature walk. Notice the different plants, insects, and animals you see along the way. Remind the children to interact with all living beings gently so as not to cause harm. Carefully look under rocks or leaves, replacing them gently when you are done. Invite participants to place in their paper bags any interesting non-living items they find, such as acorns, stones, or leaves. Use dental mirrors or other tools to get a close-up look without disturbing the environment. As you notice a new creature, pause and ask the children how it helps the

web of life. Does it provide food for someone? Does it help pollinate the flowers? Does it provide shelter?

After your walk, process the activity:

- I wonder what you enjoyed the most about our walk.
- What did you find on our walk that made you say, "Wow!"
- I wonder how we can be helpful partners for the animals and plants we saw today.

### **Including All Participants**

Identify any relevant allergies within your group, such as bee stings or pollen, and plan accordingly.

Select a location that is accessible, with paved paths, to accommodate any participant who uses a wheelchair or has mobility limitations.



## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2: STORY: SWIMMING HOME

By Janeen Grohsmeyer.

In the warm salty waters of the great blue sea, little orange and white fish called clown fish played their favorite game: chasing each other round and round, swimming as fast as they could go. Yet always they stayed close to their sea anemone home. Their sea anemone had thousands of soft white tendrils all over her body, and the tendrils were just perfect to hide in.

Aliq was following his brother Twyl. His bright orange and white stripes, outlined with black, flashed as he swam through the forest of tendrils. The sea anemone's tendrils tickled when they touched Aliq. He liked watching the tendrils sway back and forth as the water moved.

"Look," Twyl called suddenly. His side fins were going in little circles, holding him steady in one place. "Here come Mother Fish and Father Fish!"

Aliq and Twyl and their other brothers watched as Mother Fish and Father Fish slowly glided by. Their side fins touched each other as they swam.

Suddenly, Mother Fish flicked her tail and zipped on past. Father Fish went, too. A yellow striped fish with a pointy mouth was eating a tendril of the sea anemone, taking big bites. Mother and Father Fish headed right at that strange fish and started biting at it. The yellow fish swam away, and Mother and Father swam after it.

"What's happening?" Aliq asked.

Zorn, one of his older brothers, answered. "They're protecting our sea anemone. They'll be back soon."

When Mother and Father came home, a shrimp was following them and swam into the anemone. As soon as it touched the tendrils, the shrimp went still.

"What happened?" Twyl asked.

"Our sea anemone killed the shrimp with the poison on her tendrils," Zorn said.

"But we swim in her tendrils every day," Aliq said. "The poison doesn't kill us."

"That's because we're her friends," Zorn said. "We have a special covering on our scales that keeps us safe. Now watch!"

The soft white tendrils shimmered and waved. The shrimp was tossed to the middle of the sea anemone, right to the circle of her open mouth. The sea anemone swallowed the shrimp whole.

"She was hungry," Zorn said then swam away. Mother and Father Fish began gliding again. Their tails brushed

against the sea anemone's tendrils, soft and gentle on their skin.

"Mother and Father Fish are so big and so brave!" Aliq said.

"I can't wait until I'm big like them, but right now, I'm hungry!" Twyl said.

They began nibbling the tiny bits of plants that clung to their sea anemone's tendrils. Twyl found a crunchy isopod, and Aliq found another shrimp. But that was all, and they were still hungry. "We could leave our sea anemone," Aliq said.

Twyl and Aliq looked out into the great blue sea. Sting rays lived out there. Sharks did too. Huge dark fish with double rows of teeth lurked in the deep water. But there were also tasty things to eat.

"Come on!" Aliq said to Twyl. "Let's explore!" With a flick of his tail he was off, swimming away from their sea anemone home. Twyl followed him, and they swam side by side, their side fins touching each other as they glided along.

Farther and farther they went, away from their family, and away from their sea anemone home. Aliq and Twyl had never left the forest of tendrils before. They had never swum without the soft touch of their sea anemone on their fins. But Aliq found another shrimp to eat, small and tasty. Twyl found plankton, little bits of green floating by. Aliq and Twyl kept eating and swimming and eating some more.

Then Aliq stopped swimming. He looked around. Far off in the water, a dark shadow appeared. "Twyl," Aliq whispered. "What's that?"

Twyl stopped eating and looked at the shadow. It was coming closer, weaving slowly back and forth. "Shark!" Twyl yelled. "Swim! Go back home!"

Aliq and Twyl turned around and flicked their tails, zipping through the water as fast as they could go, heading for their sea anemone home. Aliq didn't want to look behind him. He didn't want to know how close the shark was. But he could feel the rippling of the water. He could hear the shark getting near. Aliq twitched his tail faster. Beside him, Twyl was swimming just as hard.

The tendrils of their sea anemone shimmered ahead of them, soft and white and warm. They were almost home.

"Swim, swim, swim," Aliq chanted to himself. "Swim! Swim! SWIM!" The water swirled around them; it smelled and tasted like shark—oily and dark and cold. Aliq and Twyl flicked their tails extra hard.

Finally! Aliq and Twyl reached their sea anemone home just in time, hiding in the soft white tendrils. The water exploded around them in bubbles as the shark turned to

go. The poison of the sea anemone was keeping it away.

Twyl and Aliq peeked between the tendrils to look at each other. Both of them were still scared. Both of them were very glad to be home, safe with Mother Fish and Father Fish and all their brothers. Both of them were

very, very glad they had a sea anemone to protect them and to be their home. And both of them knew it was their job as clown fish to take care of her. They would chase away any fish that tried to eat her tendrils. They would bring her food. And she would take care of them.

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2: HANDOUT 1: NATURE'S PARTNERSHIPS

*For use with Activity 5, Nature's Partnership Puppets.*

Clown Fish and Sea Anemone



[ClipartOf.com/93966](http://ClipartOf.com/93966)

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2: HANDOUT 2: NATURE'S PARTNERSHIPS**

*For use with Activity 5, Nature's Partnership Puppets.*

Ostrich and Zebra



## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2: HANDOUT 3: NATURE'S PARTNERSHIPS**

*For use with Activity 5, Nature's Partnership Puppets.*

Honey Bee and Flower



## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2: HANDOUT 4: NATURE'S PARTNERSHIPS**

*For use with Activity 5, Nature's Partnership Puppets.*

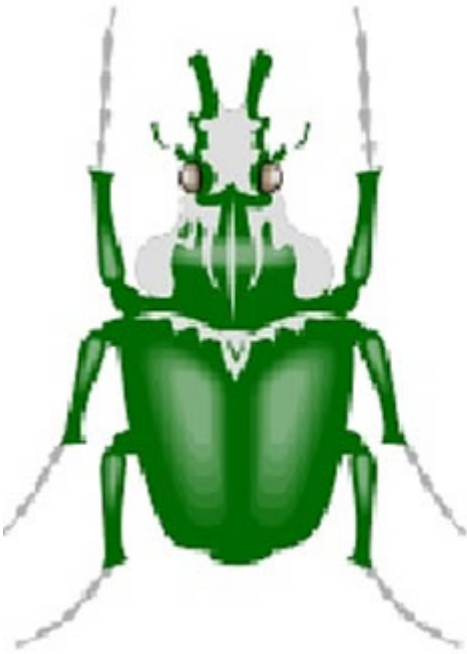
Tree and Human



## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2: HANDOUT 5: NATURE'S PARTNERSHIPS**

*For use with Activity 5, Nature's Partnership Puppets.*

Aphid and Ant



## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2: HANDOUT 6: NATURE'S PARTNERSHIPS**

*For use with Activity 5, Nature's Partnership Puppets.*

Barracuda and Cleaning Fish





## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2: HANDOUT 7: NATURE'S PARTNERSHIPS**

*For use with Activity 5, Nature's Partnership Puppets.*

Shrimp and Goby



## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2: HANDOUT 8: NATURE'S PARTNERSHIPS**

*For use with Activity 5, Nature's Partnership Puppets.*

Crocodile and Plover



## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2:**

### **LEADER RESOURCE 1: CREATING THE LEADERSHIP CHART**

On a sheet of poster board, make a chart of leadership roles the participants can share during this program. Leave enough space next to each leadership role to designate a volunteer.

Make a name tag for each participant, plus a few extra for newcomers, using card stock.

Attach Velcro tape (available at hardware and craft stores) alongside each role on the chart and on the back of each name tag.

As an alternative to the Velcro tape, you can laminate the chart and write volunteer's names with a dry erase marker.

If the group is small, combine tasks. For example, an Opening Circle Leader might light the chalice and lead the others in saying the chalice lighting words.

Possible leadership roles:

- Chalice Lighter lights the chalice.
- Chalice Leader leads the others in saying the chalice-lighting words.
- Name Game Leader is the first person in the earth ball or welcome web game.
- Song Leader leads the closing song.
- Welcoming Leader watches to be sure everyone is being included and that newcomers are welcomed, e.g., invites newcomers to sign the group covenant during the Opening.
- Materials Leader helps with setting up and giving out supplies.
- Peace Leader, with adult support, helps to resolve any conflicts that arise.
- Justice Leader watches to make sure everyone is treated fairly.

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2:**

### **LEADER RESOURCE 2: NATURE'S PARTNERSHIPS KEY**

#### **Sea Anemone & Clown Fish**

The sea anemone has poisonous tentacles which keep most fish away from it. The clown fish has special mucus that protects it from the poison. The clown fish lives by the sea anemone and is kept safe from larger fish. The clown fish chases away butterfly fish that like to eat the tips of the sea anemones tentacles. The clown fish gets a safe home and the sea anemone gets a guard.

#### **Ostrich & Zebra**

The ostrich has very good eyesight, but it has a terrible sense of hearing and smell. Zebras, on the other hand, have a strong sense of hearing and smell, but do not see as well. By staying near one another, each species can warn the other if a predator comes near. The ostrich and the zebra both get a warning when there is danger.

#### **Honeybee & Flower**

Honeybees collect pollen and nectar produced by flowers for food and energy. Pollen gets stuck on their fuzzy bodies. When they fly from flower to flower the pollen falls or rubs off onto a new flower. This pollinates the flowers and allows them to reproduce (create new flowers.) The honeybee gets food and flowers are able to reproduce.

#### **Tree & Human**

When humans breathe in, we breathe in oxygen, which is necessary for us to live and for our bodies to keep working. When we breathe out, we breathe out carbon dioxide. Trees need carbon dioxide to live and absorb it from the air through their leaves. They release the oxygen which humans (and all animals) need, back into the air. Trees and humans give each other the necessary chemicals we need to live.

#### **Aphid & Ant**

Aphids suck sap from plants and excrete a sweet waste called honeydew. Ants eat this honeydew. The ants protect the aphids from predators. Some species of ants will gather and store aphid eggs over the winter. When they hatch in the spring, the ants carry the aphids back to the plants they eat. Ants get food and the aphids get protection.

#### **Barracuda & Cleaning Fish**

The barracuda, which usually eats smaller fish, will swim to a coral reef in the ocean and move into an unusual position with its head up. When it does this, smaller fish called "cleaning fish" know that it wants to be cleaned and will not eat them. The cleaning fish eat ectoparasites and dead skin from the skin, mouth, and gills of the barracuda. The barracuda gets clean and the cleaning fish gets a good meal.

#### **Shrimp & Goby**

The shrimp digs a burrow in the sand and lives in it together with the goby. The shrimp is almost blind. The goby stays near the entrance to the burrow and warns the shrimp if there is any danger. If the shrimp wants to come out of the burrow, it touches the goby's tail with its antennae. If there is no danger, the goby wiggles its tail and the shrimp comes out. The goby gets a home and the shrimp learns when danger is present.

#### **Crocodile & Plover Bird**

The crocodile gets lots of food stuck in its teeth. When it wants to have its teeth cleaned it lies with its mouth open. The plover bird will hop right into the crocodile's mouth and eat the bits of food that are stuck. The plover bird gets food and the crocodile gets clean teeth.

**WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 2:  
LEADER RESOURCE 3: MURAL IMAGE — CLOWN FISH**

Clown Fish image by Adrian Pingstone from [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Clownfish.jpg).



## FIND OUT MORE

These online articles tell more about mutualism, symbiosis, and partnerships in nature: "[Mutualism Makes Species ... Flourish](http://www.bihartimes.in/maneka/mutualism.html)" (at [www.bihartimes.in/maneka/mutualism.html](http://www.bihartimes.in/maneka/mutualism.html)), "[Mutual Symbiotic Relationships in the Ocean: Examples of Mutualism Under the Sea](http://www.suite101.com/content/mutual-symbiotic-relationships-in-the-marine-env-a119112#ixzz1CSMs6Scz)" (at [www.suite101.com/content/mutual-symbiotic-relationships-in-the-marine-env-a119112#ixzz1CSMs6Scz](http://www.suite101.com/content/mutual-symbiotic-relationships-in-the-marine-env-a119112#ixzz1CSMs6Scz)), and "[Mutualism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutualism_%28biology%29)" (at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutualism\\_%28biology%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutualism_%28biology%29))."

Learn more about plastic waste and keeping oceans clean. Visit the website [A Recycling Revolution](http://www.recycling-revolution.com/recycling-facts.html) (at [www.recycling-revolution.com/recycling-facts.html](http://www.recycling-revolution.com/recycling-facts.html)). Learn how to "start a sea change" on the website of the [Ocean Conservancy](http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/international-coastal-cleanup-11.html) (at [www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/international-coastal-cleanup-11.html](http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/international-coastal-cleanup-11.html)).

[Tracking Trash: Flotsam, Jetsam, and the Science of Ocean Motion](http://www.amazon.com/Tracking-Trash-Flotsam-Science-Scientists/dp/0547328605/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1332270162&sr=8-1-fkmr0) (at [www.amazon.com/Tracking-Trash-Flotsam-Science-Scientists/dp/0547328605/ref=sr\\_1\\_fkmr0\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1332270162&sr=8-1-fkmr0](http://www.amazon.com/Tracking-Trash-Flotsam-Science-Scientists/dp/0547328605/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1332270162&sr=8-1-fkmr0)) is a picture book about garbage in the ocean by [Unitarian Universalist Loree Griffin Burns](http://www.loreeburns.com/) (at [www.loreeburns.com/](http://www.loreeburns.com/)).

Find out how you can help the [honey bee crisis](http://www.helpthehoneybees.com/) (at [www.helpthehoneybees.com/](http://www.helpthehoneybees.com/)), or explore more about endangered species with the [African Wildlife Foundation](http://www.awf.org/) (at [www.awf.org/](http://www.awf.org/)) or the [World Wildlife Fund](http://www.worldwildlife.org/home-full.html) (at [www.worldwildlife.org/home-full.html](http://www.worldwildlife.org/home-full.html)).

Visit the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) or the UUA's [Green Sanctuary](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) program to learn how UUs are involved in taking care of the earth.

# SESSION 3: THANKS BE FOR TREES!

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*No shade tree? Blame not the sun but yourself.  
— Chinese proverb*

This session focuses on the vital role trees play in our ecosystems, as imaginatively told in a story about a young girl in India (based on the Chipko—or "tree-hugging"—movement in India). Children will physically embody a tree in an activity that teaches the purpose of each part of a tree. A guided meditation promotes a spiritual connection with the life cycle of a tree.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Teach the importance of trees in our ecosystems and how trees grow and thrive in nature
- Foster a spiritual orientation of awe in relationship with the web of life
- Demonstrate the inspirational leadership of a child in India
- Empower participants as leaders in the group
- Reinforce the Seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Understand the importance of each part of a tree as well as the importance of trees in our ecosystems
- Be inspired by the story of the courageous leadership of a child in saving a tree
- Experience a spiritual connection with and understanding of the life cycle of a tree.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — Amrita's Tree	10
Activity 3: Build a Tree	15
Activity 4: Acorn Guided Meditation	10
Faith in Action: Tree Planting	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: Tree Rubbings	20
Alternate Activity 3: Getting to Know a Tree	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

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

- Is there a tree that is special to you, either now or in the past?
- In what ways are you spiritually nourished by that connection?
- In what other ways are you connected to trees?
- In what ways are you caring for trees in your everyday actions?

Allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

— adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we will talk about how people and trees are interdependent. Trees give us many things we need to live, and we do the same for trees.

Ask if anyone knows what trees do for people, or what people do for trees?

#### Including All Participants

Children this age differ widely in reading ability. Point out words as you read them aloud, but do not expect children to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the



earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — AMRITA'S TREE (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Amrita's Tree](#)" (included in this document)
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as a small globe or map to locate India, a tree branch or tree "cookie" (a cross section, like that of a slice of a tree), pictures of girls and women in saris
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions and choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, tell or read the story, "Amrita's Tree."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion using questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- I wonder what Amrita was feeling inside as the woodcutter came toward her?
- I wonder if any of you have done something brave, like Amrita? How did that feel?
- How do you think Amrita felt when she saw everyone hugging trees after they saw her do it? How do you feel when you are a leader?
- Why do you suppose it is important for Unitarian Universalists to help take care of plants and trees?

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 3: BUILD A TREE (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A chime or rain stick

### Preparation for Activity

- Find a large, open space, preferably outdoors, with plenty of room for movement and where noise will not disturb others.

### Description of Activity

In this role playing activity, the children work together to create with their bodies one large (and noisy) tree while

learning the purpose of each part of the tree. It is wonderful to do outside, preferably among other trees, but can also be done on a patio, in a field, or indoors.

Form six groups—trunk, bark, leaves, roots, flowers, and seeds—and designate a small number of pollinators (these can be co-leaders, or children). Explain that you will tell them what motions and sounds to make for their tree part, but they should wait until you sound the chime or rain stick to indicate that everyone has become part of the tree.

Introduce the purpose of each tree part as you describe the motions and sounds for each:

- **TRUNK.** Children stand together in a circle facing out, their backs together, holding up their arms. The trunk moves nutrients up and down the tree and provides support. The trunk will make a “whoosh whoosh” sound.
- **BARK.** Children surround the trunk, facing out and holding hands to create a protective barrier. The bark, which protects the trunk, will say out loud “safe safe”.
- **LEAVES.** Children stand around the bark facing out, shaking their arms and hands in front of them as if wind were blowing. The leaves are working to produce food for the tree so they say “yum, yum.”
- **ROOTS.** Children sit around the base of the tree with their legs stretched out, collecting water and nutrients from the soil. Their sound is “slurp slurp.”
- **FLOWERS.** Children stand near the leaves or interspersed with the leaves, and attract pollinators by shouting “pollinate me, pollinate me” while holding their hands around their faces like petals. After the pollinator taps it, the flower dies (falls to the ground).
- **SEEDS.** Children stand around the tree next to the flowers. After the flowers fall to the ground, the seeds say “disperse, disperse!” while spinning and jumping away from the adult tree.
- **POLLINATORS.** The pollinators are animals or insects that travel from flower to flower collecting and transferring pollen so fertilization takes place and a new seed or nut can form. After the flowers have shouted “pollinate me” several times, the pollinator gently taps them one by one on the shoulder.

Sound the chime to start the process of building a tree. The group has created an adult tree and with it, seeds to grow many more trees in the future. As time allows, build the tree a second or third time, with children taking different parts.

Process the activity with questions such as:

- What part of the tree did you like being? What is the purpose of that part of the tree?
- What do you think would happen if any part of the tree was missing?
- How can we help care for each part of the tree?

## ACTIVITY 4: ACORN GUIDED MEDIATION (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Acorn Guided Meditation](#) (included in this document)
- Acorns
- Optional: Music and/or quiet nature sounds, and a music player

### Preparation for Activity

- Gather acorns, at least one for each participant.
- Designate a space, preferably outdoors, where participants can comfortably sit, an arm's length apart.
- Optional: Set up music player and queue the CD.

### Description of Activity

This guided mediation invites children to make a spiritual connection as they experience the life cycle of a tree.

Show them an acorn. Explain that they will “grow” from an acorn into a large oak tree. Have them spread out so all the trees have plenty of room to grow, out of arms’ reach of each other. If you are using music, begin playing it. Invite participants to get comfortable and close their eyes as you guide them in this meditation. Read the meditation from Leader Resource 1 slowly, leaving pauses for participants to “grow” in a quiet and contemplative manner.

After the meditation, allow a moment of silence.

Give each participant an acorn to take with them.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 2, [Mural Image — White Oak](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

## Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 2, Mural Image — White Oak. If possible, print in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder Mural.
- Display the newsprint with lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

## Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we learned about our interdependence with trees. Trees give us many things we need to live, and we do the same for trees. Unitarian Universalists believe all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like the web on our mural. Each time we meet we add something new to the World of Wonder mural; today we add a white oak to remind us of the importance of trees in our lives.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands". Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

# FAITH IN ACTION: TREE PLANTING

## Materials for Activity

- Information about various tree-planting campaigns
- Tree(s), shovels, water, garden gloves

## Preparation for Activity

- Explore tree-planting options at organizations such as the national [Arbor Day Foundation](http://www.arborday.org/shopping/memberships/memberships.cfm) (at [www.arborday.org/shopping/memberships/memberships.cfm](http://www.arborday.org/shopping/memberships/memberships.cfm)), which charges a \$10 membership fee and provides ten free trees upon joining, or a local organization such as [Trees Atlanta](http://www.treesatlanta.org/Default.aspx) (at [www.treesatlanta.org/Default.aspx](http://www.treesatlanta.org/Default.aspx)).
- Choose a location and secure appropriate congregational permissions.
- Optional: If the congregation participates in the [UUA Green Sanctuary](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml) (at

[www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml)) program, invite members of that committee to participate in Faith in Action activities as appropriate.

- Choose native or non-invasive trees to plant and purchase, or find smaller, free trees.
- Set a date for planting trees.
- Publicize your effort and sign up volunteers from participants' families and the wider congregation.

## Description of Activity

This Faith in Action activity engages children in the direct action of planting trees to help protect the environment for future generations.

If trees need to be purchased, you might ask individual families to "sponsor" a tree or ask a local nursery to donate a few trees. If possible, have families pick up the trees to be planted, so children can see the process from start to finish.

Give participants active roles so they will learn the steps involved in tree planting. Talk to participants about the importance of trees. Tell them about the particular kinds of trees you are planting. On the day of the planting, take pictures of the young tree(s) and the children planting them. You might display a photo montage of the project for members of the congregation. After the planting, publicly thank all the people involved in the project. Consider holding a worship service on the environment or trees on the day you will do the planting. If this is not possible, highlight the tree planting during a later worship service or in the congregation's newsletter. If your congregation celebrates a Water Communion at the start of the program year, consider using some of the combined water to water the tree(s) each fall.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help?
- How was the timing? What needs to change for a session to work better within our time frame?

- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

No shade tree? Blame not the sun but yourself.  
— Chinese proverb

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we learned about trees' vital role in our lives. We used our bodies to build a tree and then experienced a guided meditation in which we grew from acorns to mighty oak trees. We represented our interdependence with trees in the web of life by adding a white oak tree to our World of Wonder Mural.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** your family's interdependence with trees. In what way do trees care for you? In what ways do you care for trees? What actions can you take as a family to protect trees and help them thrive?

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...**

**A Family Adventure.** Borrow or buy a book about identifying trees in your local area, such as *What Tree is That? A Guide to the More Common Trees Found in North America* by the Arbor Day Foundation. Go on a nature walk with your book and identify as many trees as you are able. Or choose a tree near your home and visit it at different times of day and during different seasons. Notice what animals and insects leave near or on the tree. Learn together what kind of tree it is and whether any parts of the tree are used for food or medicinal purposes. Create a tree journal to keep notes about the tree, draw pictures, create tree poems, make bark rubbings, etc. As you explore the tree, talk about the times when your heart fills with awe, wonder and amazement in response to the web of life.

**Family Discovery.** As a family, learn about the Green Belt Movement (GBM), founded in 1977 by Professor Wangari Maathai. GBM has planted over 47 million trees in Kenya. GBM works at the grassroots, national, and international levels to promote environmental conservation, build climate resilience, and empower communities, especially women and girls; to foster democratic space and sustainable livelihoods. Books for children about Maathai, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, include:

- *Flight of the Hummingbird: A Parable for the Environment* by Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas (Greystone, 2008)

- *Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya* by Donna Jo Napoli and Kadir Nelson (Simon & Schuster, 2010)
- *Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai* by Claire A. Nivola (Farrar, Straus, 2008)
- *Seeds of Change: Wangari's Gift to the World* by Jen Cullerton Johnson and Sonia Lynn Sadler (Lee & Low, 2010)
- *Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa* by Jeanette Winter (Harcourt, 2008)

**A Family Game.** A card game based on the Dr. Seuss book, *The Lorax*, is available from [Amazon](http://Amazon) (at [www.amazon.com/](http://www.amazon.com/)) and other vendors. Read *The Lorax* with your child and discuss the importance of trees and taking care of the environment. Then play the card game together or, better yet, create your own game!

**A Family Ritual.** Make time each day for a brief meditation. Join hands, close your eyes, and take a moment to become aware of your breathing. Talk with your child about the fact that you are breathing in oxygen made by the trees and that the trees are taking in the carbon dioxide that you exhale. Take a few minutes to repeat this ritual in an outdoor space that feels sacred or has special meaning to your family.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.
- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.

2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.

Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: TREE RUBBINGS (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Light-colored 11x17-inch paper, and pencils or crayons for all participants
- Pencils or crayons
- Tree identification books

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Select an outdoor site where the bark of several different types of trees is accessible to the children.
- Obtain tree identification books pertinent to your local area. One possibility is as *What Tree is That? A Guide to the More Common Trees Found in North America* (Arbor Day Foundation).
- Read Alternate Activity 3, Getting to Know a Tree, which also connects children with actual trees in an outdoor location. Consider using both activities together to address a variety of learning styles and capabilities.

### **Description of Activity**

Participants get to know a tree close up.

Go outside to the area selected for the activity, bringing paper, rubbing tools, and tree identification books with you. Tell participants to look at the various trees and choose one that looks interesting to them (more than one child can use the same tree). Show children how to place the paper up against the bark of the tree and rub the pencil or crayon evenly over the tree to create an impression of the bark. Optional: A rubbing can also be done of a tree's fallen leaves.

Distribute paper and pencils or crayons and invite children to make their own rubbings. Encourage them to pay attention to the pattern of the bark which emerges on their paper. Consulting the tree identification books, help the children identify the type of tree they have chosen and write the name of the tree on their paper.

Display the rubbings in your meeting space or invite children to take them home.

### **Including All Participants**

Be sure to determine whether there are any relevant allergies within your group, such as bee stings or pollen, and plan accordingly. Select a location that is safe as well as accessible for all.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: GETTING TO KNOW A TREE (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Lengths of clean cloth for covering eyes

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Select a safe, accessible outdoor location with many trees. (Be sure the tree trunks do not have poison ivy vines growing up them.)
- Read Alternate Activity 2, Tree Rubbings, which also connects children with actual trees in an outdoor location. Consider using both activities together to address a variety of learning styles and capabilities.

### **Description of Activity**

Participants get "up close and personal" with a tree and then identify the individual tree they explored.

Have the children form pairs. In these words or your own, say:

You and your partner will take turns getting to know a tree, using your senses of touch, smell, and hearing—but not sight! Decide which partner will be the explorer first and cover that person's eyes. The other partner is the guide who will choose a tree and lead the explorer, carefully and slowly, in a wandering path to a tree. At the tree, the explorer uses their senses of touch, smell, and hearing to get to know the tree. The guide then leads the explorer back to the starting place and then helps the explorer uncover their eyes. The explorer then tries to identify the tree they just got to know. Then, we will switch roles and let the new explorer get to know a tree.

If you have a small group, do this activity one pair of children at a time, while the others watch.

### **Including All Participants**

If a child is uncomfortable having their eyes covered, they can try to keep their eyes tightly closed, or take the role of guide.

If the group includes any blind children, adapt this activity. Have all "explorers" cover or close their eyes, but simply have them verbally describe the tree they are "getting to know" rather than go back to the starting place and guess which tree it was. Guides can lead their partners directly to a tree rather than take a deliberately confusing path. With your help, a blind child can perform the role of guide, let them choose a tree for their partner by feel.



## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 3: STORY: AMRITA'S TREE

Adapted from "Amrita's Tree" in [The Barefoot Book of Earth Tales](#) by Dawn Casey and Anne Wilson (Cambridge: Barefoot Books, 2009). Used by permission.

Amrita leaned back against her favorite tree and rested. After the glare of the desert sun, it was cool and green in the forest grove. Sometimes, Amrita climbed her tree. Sometimes the wind swayed her and she was a forest queen. Sometimes she talked to her tree, sharing her daydreams and her secrets, but today was so peaceful that she sat in silence.

Amrita closed her eyes and sighed with pleasure.

*CAAWK!* She heard an unearthly shriek, the shrill alarm call of the peacock, echoing through the forest. A shiver shot down Amrita's spine and she scrambled to her feet.

With a flick of their tails, the gazelles were gone. The rabbits scattered. Now Amrita heard the tramp of many heavy boots, the crack of branches snapping. Through the trees she saw men marching, each one carrying something. Amrita strained to see. Bright edges! Sharp flashes! They were carrying axes.

"Cut down every tree you can," she heard the chief woodcutter say. "The Maharajahs need plenty of wood." Amrita drew in her breath. They couldn't cut down the forest! Without these trees there'd be no fruit to eat, no leaves to feed the cows, no shelter from the sun.

Above her, watching over her, Amrita's own tree stirred in the breeze. "I won't let them hurt you," she said out loud. "I promise I'll protect you. I don't know how, but I will!"

Quick as a blackbuck, she ran to the village. Amrita found her mother. "Amma, Amma," she panted, pushing wind-swept hair out of her eyes, "I saw men in the forest, men with axes, and they are going to cut down the trees!"

Amrita's mother rushed around the village, calling the women away from their work. "We must save the trees!" she urged. "Come on!"

They arrived to find the woodcutters sharpening their axes. Amrita's mother greeted the men politely, pressing her hands together and bowing her head: "Namaste. We do not want trouble, but we cannot let you cut down these trees."

The chief woodcutter cast his eyes over the straggle of women before him and snorted. "You do not own these trees. We have orders from the Maharajah."

"Sir, these trees are our life," Amrita's mother implored. "Their roots hold the soil together; they keep the land from sliding away during the monsoon rains. Without them our fields and homes will be washed away."

"Never mind your mud huts," the chief replied with a sweep of his hand. "With this timber the Maharajah will have the finest palace in all of India!"

"Please!" begged Amrita's mother. "These roots soak up rain, so the earth can give us spring water. Can't you see? We need these trees to survive."

"Enough!" barked the chief. "Now, out of my way and let me work. Now!" He turned to the woodcutters and ordered, "Cut down the trees!" A burly woodcutter shouldered his axe and strolled over to an ancient khejari. With a swift swoop his iron blade bit deep into the bark.

With a terrible groan the mighty tree came crashing to the ground. Amrita's mother covered her mouth with her hands. Amrita stared in disbelief.

The woodcutters began to chop at another tree, and another. Soon the grove was a graveyard of trees. Broken limbs scattered the floor. Leaves dropped like tears.

A woodcutter brushed past Amrita, toward her own special tree. "No! No! Please don't!" she cried, tears springing to her eyes. "Please don't cut down my tree." The woodcutter advanced.

Amrita stepped in front of him, blocking his path. Her voice shook as she spoke: "I will not let anyone harm my tree."

The woodcutter laughed out loud. "Little girl, there's nothing you can do to stop us." Amrita thought of her beloved tree lying dead on the forest floor and she ran from the woodcutter toward her tree.

Amrita flung her arms around her tree, pressing herself against it. "If you want to cut the tree, you will have to cut me first!" The man and his axe were behind her. She could hear the sound of her own breathing, hard and loud and fast. The man raised his sharp blade.

"Swing your axe!" commanded the chief. Amrita clenched her teeth and clung onto her old friend, so that the bumpy bark was pressing into her cheek and arms. She felt the strength of the tree coursing through her. And she knew with a fierce bright certainty that she was doing the right thing.

"Swing your axe!" the chief shouted again.

"I... " the woodcutter faltered. He looked down at the girl—this mere sapling of a girl—her eyes squeezed shut, her thin arms hugging so tight, her tearstained cheeks pale with fright. "I... I cannot."

Amrita opened one eye, then another, to see the woodcutter's head bowed, his axe at his feet. All around her, people were hugging trees. Women and children, wives and daughters, grandmothers and toddlers all hugged the trees. Some ancient trees had trunks so broad that generations of women were joining hands to embrace them.

The axes lay on the forest floor. The men huddled together and talked in low voices. Then, without a word, the laborers picked up their axes and walked out of the wood.

Amrita's mother called to her. "What were you thinking of? I was so afraid."

"So was I," said Amrita. Her mother sat down beside her on the forest floor and stroked her hair. "You know the woodcutters will tell the Maharajah what happened," she said gently. "They will come back, or the Maharajah himself will come..."

The next morning, the women were distracted at their work. Their hands were busy, but their eyes strayed to the horizon. Would the woodcutters return? Or the

Maharajah? Would he punish those who had defied his orders?

That afternoon, in a thunder of hooves and a cloud of dust, the Maharajah arrived.

The women joined hands and pulled their children close. But Amrita rose to greet the Maharajah with all the dignity of a forest queen.

She was surprised to see that he carried not an axe but a bright bundle. He climbed down from his horse. Amrita watched in wonder as he unwrapped the silken cloth. "I present this royal decree to you, Amrita," said the Maharajah, "and to the women of your village, in honor of your courage and your wisdom. I promise that, from this day on, no tree in this forest will ever be cut down."

Hundreds of years later, folk songs of the people who hugged the trees still echo through the villages of India. Amrita's courage has inspired people across the land to stand together to protect forests. Thousands of trees have been saved, and a million more planted.

And in one sacred grove, Amrita's tree still grows.



## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 3:

### LEADER RESOURCE 1: ACORN GUIDED MEDITATION

Today we built a tree using the *outside* of our bodies. Now we'll go *inside our imaginations*. Let's imagine what it might feel like to grow from an acorn into a mighty oak.

Find a space where you are arms' reach away from anyone else. Squat on the ground in a tight ball, close your eyes, and imagine that you are a small little acorn... You are the seed of the mighty oak tree... I wonder how you were planted in the soil?... Maybe a farmer or squirrel put you there!... Now that you are in the soil, you need a few things to grow... I see rain clouds gathering... Feel the gentle rain as it comes to quench your thirst.

[Leaders: Walk among the "seeds" and water them by gently touching their heads with wiggling fingers.]

Now your roots are going deeper and anchoring you in the soil... You need some sunshine to keep growing... Turn your face up to the sun and feel its rays warming the soil all around you... You are beginning to sprout!... Slowly and gradually begin to straighten your legs...

The sunlight is shining down on you, and you have lots of water and nutrients in the soil that are helping you grow even taller... Continue to slowly stand up with your arms by your side... there's more sun... and more rain... and now your branches are growing as you stretch your arms, out one at a time... and now unfurl your leaves, by opening your hands and gently wiggling your fingers... You are now a small tree or sapling.

As you continue to grow, raise your arms high up in the air toward the sun... Now you are a fully grown tree... in the spring, you will have flowers... in the fall you will have nuts... acorns... And you will live a long life, providing a home for birds, food for insects and squirrels, and oxygen for people... Listen to the bird song... Feel the squirrels tickling your bark as they run up and down your strong trunk... Breathe out your oxygen for people and use the carbon dioxide the people provide for you...

A storm is coming... Your branches shake and blow in the wind, but your roots keep you anchored... After many storms and many seasons, you are growing old... You may even lose the top of your tree... Slowly hang your head down... as you begin to lose branches to disease and storms... Slowly bring your arms down to your sides again...

What will happen when you die? ... Maybe you will begin to rot inside but still remain standing... If this happens, you are then called a snag... Snags offer a great place for woodpeckers to hollow out their homes! ... Listen to the woodpeckers drumming...

Eventually, over many years, you—the snag—will fall to the ground... Lie down now as you become a log lying on the forest floor... What might happen next? ... If the conditions are right—if there is enough sun, rain, and soil—a new tree will grow in your place from a seed or nut carried by the wind, or a bird, or a squirrel... And the cycle begins again... Slowly open your eyes and leave the forest as you come back to our circle here.

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 3: LEADER RESOURCE 2: MURAL IMAGE — WHITE OAK**

[Photo](#) by Karren Wcisel, used by permission.



## FIND OUT MORE

Learn more about trees and how to protect them from the [Arbor Day Foundation](http://www.arborday.org/) (at [www.arborday.org/](http://www.arborday.org/)).

Visit the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) or the UUA's [Green Sanctuary](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) program to learn how UUs are involved in taking care of the earth.

# SESSION 4: BALANCE IN OUR ECOSYSTEM

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Be aware of wonder. Live a balanced life—learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some. — Robert Fulghum, author and Unitarian Universalist minister*

The interdependent web of existence has evolved over millions of years to include extraordinary diversity of life. The long-term sustainability of each and all depends on balance. In Unitarian Universalism—an ecologically-minded religion—living in balance with all Earth becomes a critical spiritual practice.

This session uses role play to demonstrate how balance can be maintained in a large, interdependent system and suggest the effects of imbalance. The central story, a Nigerian folk tale, shows the consequences of not living in balance with nature and encourages children to consume less and conserve more.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the critical role of balance in protecting the interdependent web of life
- Give concrete opportunities to experience balance and imbalance in an ecosystem
- Emphasize balance as a spiritual orientation which can guide how we interact with the Earth
- Empower participants as leaders within the group
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Respond to a Nigerian folk tale that introduces the concept of balance in an ecosystem

- Through role play, explore the importance of balance and actions that help maintain balance
- Understand ways human actions affect the balance of ecosystems
- Experience leadership roles in the group.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — Why the Sky is Far Away	10
Activity 3: Predator/Prey Game	15
Activity 4: Ecosystem Role Play	20
Faith in Action: Plan a Sharing Project	60
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: Balance Nature Walk	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

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

- Is there balance in how you spend your time?
- Are the material goods you own in balance with the material goods you need?
- How might you restore or nurture balance in your life?

Allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

—adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we will talk about our balance in our ecosystem. An ecosystem is another word for our interdependent web.

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a very wide span in terms of reading abilities; point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — WHY THE SKY IS FAR AWAY (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Why the Sky is Far Away](#)" (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as a small globe or map to locate Nigeria, brass bracelets or coral beads, pictures of the sky with clouds
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions and choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to

see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, tell or read the story, "Why the Sky Is Far Away."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion using questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- Have you ever had a meal, or maybe a dessert, that you just couldn't stop eating?
- Why is it important to take just enough and not more?
- I wonder how balance is important in the interdependent web of all existence.

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 3: PREDATOR/PREY GAME (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Lengths of clean cloth for covering eyes
- A bell that can be worn around the neck or as a bracelet/anklet

### Preparation for Activity

- Plan to lead this activity in a large, open area, preferably outdoors.

### Description of Activity

This activity is a fun way to teach the concept of predator and prey within an ecosystem.

Explain:

A predator is an animal that hunts another animal for food. The animal being hunted is the prey.

Ask the children for examples. You can give some, such as hawk and mouse, bird and mosquito, (or even a mosquito and a human).

Ask for one child volunteer to be the predator and one to be the prey. Tell the rest of the children to hold hands and form a circle around the predator and prey. They have the very important role of creating a protective circle, which gently keeps the predator or prey from wandering outside the circle or bumping into things.

Cover the eyes of both the volunteer predator and prey and place a bell around the neck, wrist, or ankle of the prey. Tell the children who create the protective circle they must stay quiet so that the animals inside the circle can find or avoid each other.

Announce that the hawk (or bird, or mosquito) is getting hungry. This means the predator should start moving around to find its prey and the prey should start moving around to avoid the predator. The predator must listen very closely so it can find its prey. Once it has "caught" the prey (by gently tagging the prey), other children can take turns playing the predator and prey for as long as you have time.

You can also add additional prey or additional predators depending on how large the group is, but be sure enough other children are in the protective circle to keep the predator and prey safe from bumping into objects. After each round, process the activity with questions such as:

- How easy or hard was it for the predator to find its meal?
- What would happen if there were lots more predators than prey?
- How would you like to get your food this way?

## ACTIVITY 4: ECOSYSTEM ROLE PLAY (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A chime

### Preparation for Activity

- Lead this activity in a large, open space, preferably outdoors.

### Description of Activity

Children learn about balance as an attribute of ecosystems. They learn why balance matters to the different species that live in an ecosystem together.

Gather in the space you have prepared. Explain that a forest is an ecosystem, a group of living beings that live together in balance. Ask the children what animals or

plants live in a forest and affirm the appropriate answers.

Invite the children to stand at least arms' width apart, close their eyes, and imagine they are in a forest. Say:

Imagine you are a tree. You have roots that go deep down into the ground to hold you up and help you stay balanced. Your arms are your branches. The sun shines down on you and the rain falls on you. When I sound the chime, open your eyes and act like a tree. When I sound it again, freeze in place.

Ring the chime. (As children role play at being trees, you may need to remind them that trees do not talk.) After a minute or two, ring it again. When everyone has frozen, ask the children what would happen if there were too many trees in a forest. For example, there could be too much shade and other plants would not be able to grow. Next, ask participants what would happen if the trees started dying and there weren't enough trees. Possibilities could include animals losing their homes or shelter or not having enough fruit or nuts to eat. Point out that having just the right amount of trees is when nature is balanced.

Ask children to close their eyes again. Say:

Now you are a bird. You build your nests in trees. You eat insects and berries. You love to fly in the sky and you sing a beautiful song. When I ring the chime, open your eyes and act like a bird. When I ring it again, freeze in place.

Ring the chime. After one or two minutes, ring it again. When everyone is frozen in place, ask the children what would happen if there were too many birds in a forest. For example, they might eat all the berries and there wouldn't be enough for other creatures. Or, they might eat all the insects. Next, ask participants what would happen if the birds started dying and there weren't enough birds. Possibilities could include too many insects since there wouldn't be birds eating them, or not enough food for mammals that eat birds or eggs.

Have the children close their eyes again. Say:

Now you are a squirrel. You build nests in trees and love to run and jump on tree branches. Your favorite food is acorns. When I ring the chime, open your eyes and pretend you are a squirrel. When I ring it again, freeze in your place.

Ring the chime. After one or two minutes, ring it again. When everyone has frozen, ask the participants what would happen if there were too many squirrels in the forest. For example, they might take up all of the space in the trees and there wouldn't be enough room for bird nests. Or, they might eat all the acorns and other animals that eat acorns would not get enough. Next, ask participants what would happen if the squirrels started dying and there weren't enough squirrels in the forest.



For example, maybe too many trees would grow because there wouldn't be enough squirrels eating acorns, or maybe animals that eat squirrels would not have enough food.

Divide the group so there are equal numbers of each type of living beings: trees, birds, and squirrels. Tell the children to act like their living being when you ring the chime and to freeze when you ring it a second time.

Ring the chime. After one or two minutes, ring it again. Process the activity with questions such as:

- I wonder what other creatures or plants might live in our forest.
- What about people? Are we part of a forest ecosystem? [Even though we may not live in a forest, people may visit a forest. Most of us use things that come from a forest—wood made from trees, medicine made from forest plants, food made from forest animals.]
- I wonder how balance is important in a forest.
- I wonder what happens to animals and plants when there are too many people in an ecosystem.
- I wonder what people can do to help forests and other ecosystems, like deserts, oceans, or wetlands stay balanced.
- I wonder why balance is important in the web of life.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 2, [Mural Image — Sky](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 2, Mural Image — Sky. If possible, print in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the newsprint with lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

## Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we learned about balance in our ecosystem and things we can do to help maintain balance. Unitarian Universalists believe all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like the web on our mural. Each time we meet we add something new to the World of Wonder mural. Today we add a picture of a Nigerian village and the far away sky to remind us of the importance of balance.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: PLAN A SHARING PROJECT (60 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- "[Guide to Sharing](http://www.newdream.org/programs/collaborative-communities/community-action-kit) (at [www.newdream.org/programs/collaborative-communities/community-action-kit](http://www.newdream.org/programs/collaborative-communities/community-action-kit))" Community Action Kit
- A copy of the story, "[Why the Sky Is Far Away](#) (included in this document) "

### Preparation for Activity

- Choose a date and time for a family gathering.
- Download and print several copies of the "Guide to Sharing" from the Center for the New American Dream.
- Optional: If the congregation participates in the [UUA Green Sanctuary](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtm) (at [www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtm](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtm) l) program, invite members of that committee to participate in Faith in Action activities as appropriate.

## Description of Activity

This activity invites the participants and their families to make a shared commitment to care for the earth and to develop leadership roles in the congregation.

With the religious educator, choose a date and time for a family gathering. You may wish to invite the wider congregation, as well. Designate adult volunteers to lead the planning process. Have these volunteers and other



adults invited familiarize themselves with the "Guide to Sharing" from the Center for the New American Dream CNAD.

At the event, introduce the World of Wonder program and share the story "Why the Sky is Far Away." Lead a brief discussion of the story. Suggest and solicit ways the actions of individuals can affect the larger community. Point out that one message of the story is that we should consume less—only what we need—and conserve more.

The CNAD's "Guide to Sharing" provides many resources and ideas for different types of "sharing" events such as a Community Swap, a Tool Lending Library and more. Invite families to explore the ideas in the Guide and together choose a project for the World of Wonder families to do. Once the project is chosen, ask for volunteers to form a small planning group to determine next steps to implement the multigenerational project.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help?
- How was the timing? What needs to change for a session to work better within our time frame?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

Be aware of wonder. Live a balanced life—learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some. — Robert Fulghum, author and Unitarian Universalist minister

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we learned the importance of balance in the web of life. We considered what happens to an ecosystem if one species overpopulates or dies out. The central story was a Nigerian folk tale that showed the consequences of not living in balance with nature. Children learned ways one individual's actions can affect those sharing their ecosystem.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** your local ecosystem and the different plants and animals that live together in balance. Name the ways they are interdependent. Consider what would happen if their balance were disrupted. For example, what creatures would be affected if your local plant life was hit hard by a drought, or if there were an over-abundance of a predator species?

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...**

**A Family Adventure.** Go for a walk in a local nature preserve, park, or even city neighborhood. As you walk, count the different plants, insects and other living beings you encounter. Talk about the delicate balance that allows all of those creatures and life forms to live comfortably together.

**Family Discovery.** Research a local invasive species—a species that has been transported from one ecosystem or region into another, whether accidentally or purposefully, to the detriment of the ecosystem,. Examples are purple loosestrife, which overgrows in wetlands; zebra mussels, which hitch rides on boats; and the Asian Longhorn Beetle, which is killing trees in Massachusetts. On a government website, you can [learn about invasive species in your area](http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/) (at [www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/](http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/)). You can visit or call a local office of a government agency involved with ecosystem management, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the agency that regulates fish and wildlife, or the Army Corps of Engineers. Find out about ways citizens can help prevent the spread of invasive species. Look for a multigenerational project or action you can do as a family.

**A Family Game.** Play Jenga(R) or build with blocks together. As you play, talk about balance in the game. Identify actions that help strengthen balance and actions that weaken it. Ask your children how the balancing game is like nature. Point out that when one block falls in a tower, sometimes a whole tower falls, too. This is similar to the way balance functions in an ecosystem.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

**Materials for Activity**

- Ball of yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.
- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.
2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.

Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: BALANCE NATURE WALK (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Lunch-sized paper bags, cloth bags, or small baggies, one per child
- Optional: Flashlights, magnifying glasses, or handheld dental mirrors

### Preparation for Activity

- Inform families of your plan to bring the children outdoors. Arrange all necessary details, such as transportation, permission slips, sunscreen, insect repellent, and appropriate clothing.

- Select an appropriate location for your nature walk in consultation with the religious educator.
- Make sure you can recognize poison ivy. Learn about any venomous or otherwise dangerous creatures in your local habitat and how to avoid them.
- Determine whether anyone is allergic to bee stings, pollen, or other outdoor allergens and plan accordingly.

### Description of Activity

Participants experience nature directly, with a focus on balance.

Invite the group to join you on a nature walk, focused on balance in your local ecosystem. As you walk, notice and count the different varieties of plants and animals that you encounter. Invite participants to place any interesting non-living items they find in their paper bags, such as acorns, stones, or leaves. As you see a new species, ask the participants to consider what would happen if that species over-populated or if the species died out. Point out that when one species over-populates that can mean there is not enough space or food for other living beings. When a species dies out that can mean there is a loss of shelter or food, or even that another species will over-populate because it no longer has a natural predator.

When you have completed your walk, process the activity with questions such as:

- I wonder what would happen if one of the species we saw (provide an example) disappeared. (Note: this can lead to a loss of shelter or food or the overpopulation of another species because it no longer has a natural predator)
- I wonder what would happen if one of the species we saw (provide an example) overpopulated and took over the area. (Note: This can lead to competition for food and shelter. If a plant overpopulates this can lead to a lack of sunlight or growing space.)
- I wonder how people impact the balance in the ecosystem we saw today.
- I wonder how we can be helpful partners for the animals and plants we saw today?
- Unitarian Universalists believe that everything alive is connected in an interdependent web—a web of life. I wonder what you noticed today about the web of life?

**Including All Participants**

Determine whether there are any relevant allergies within your group, such as bee stings or pollen, and plan accordingly.

If you have a child who uses a wheelchair or has limited mobility, select a location that is accessible, with paved paths.

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 4: STORY: WHY THE SKY IS FAR AWAY

Adapted from "Why the Sky is Far Away" in [The Barefoot Book of Earth Tales](#) by Dawn Casey and Anne Wilson (Cambridge: Barefoot Books, 2009). Used by permission.

In the beginning, the sky was close to the earth. So close you could reach up and touch it. And you could eat it! In those days, people always had enough to eat, without ever having to work for it. Men and women did not have to plow the fields and sow the seeds and gather the crops. Children did not have to fetch sticks for the fire. Whenever anybody was hungry, they just reached up and tore off a piece of the sky.

But people grew careless with the sky's gifts. They broke off more than they needed. After all, the sky was so big; there would always be enough for everybody. Who cared about a little wasted sky?

But the sky cared. Soon the sky's sorrow turned to resentment, and its resentment grew to anger. "I offer myself every day to these people," the sky brooded, "and they throw me away, half eaten, like garbage."

"People of Earth!" The sky's eyes flashed light lightning. Clouds bubbled and boiled. "You have not treated me with respect. You have wasted my gifts. I warn you. If you are greedy, I will leave. I will move far away."

The people listened and promised to be more careful.

After that, no one broke off more than they could eat. And they always remembered to thank the sky.

But then the time came for the greatest festival of the year, in honor of the chief of the kingdom. The night rang with music. Bells clanged and drums banged. People stamped and clapped and laughed.

The tables were heaped with dishes of specially prepared sky. Sky in every flavor, from custard apple to coco plum. There was plenty for everyone, for the sky was generous. It trusted the people to take only what they needed.

But there was one woman who was never satisfied. Osato always wanted more. Her arms were heavy with brass bracelets. But brass wasn't good enough for her—she wanted coral beads. And most of all, she loved to eat.

First she helped herself to a handful of noon-yellow sky that tasted like pineapple. Chunk after chunk disappeared into her mouth. Then she ladled out some sky stew, spicy and warm. She lifted the dish to her lips, draining it, dumplings and all. Soon her stomach was stuffed. She loosened her robe. What next? Delicate slices of morning sky, pink and glistening. With a swift

movement, she scooped them up and slurped them down all at once.

At last the tables were empty. And Osato was full. She waddled home.

She was full to bursting, but her eyes kept wandering up to the sky. What would it taste like right now? Citrus storms? Her taste buds tingled. Luscious mango? Her mouth watered. Honey sunsets? She licked her lips.

Her fingers began to pull out her spoon — the one she kept tucked in her headscarf — just in case. She stopped herself just in time. Osato knew that the sky offered itself only because no one ever took more than they needed. And she knew she didn't need any more. But oh, how she wanted some! Just one more spoonful.

"The sky is so huge," Osato said to herself. "It can't hurt just to have a little bit more."

She pulled out her spoon and plunged it in. She savored a mouthful of sky. And another. She threw down her spoon and scooped with her hands, sucking the delicious sky from her fingertips.

Finally, without another thought, Osato pulled down a great slab of sky. Enough to feed a family for weeks.

She licked all around the edges, chewing more slowly now. She stared up at the huge hole above her. She stared down at the enormous mound of sky. And she knew she had taken more than even she could eat. Above her head, there were rumblings. "What have I done?" Osato gasped. "I cannot waste this sky. What shall I do?"

She called to her husband to help, but he had been feasting too and was slumped in his chair, too full even to move. Still, he managed a few mouthfuls.

She called to her children to help, but they too were full from the wonderful feast. Still, they forced down a few fingerfuls.

She called to her neighbors to help, but they had been at the festival too and at the sight of more food, they held their stomachs and groaned. But they ate as much as they could, with worried frowns on their faces and anxious glances above their heads.

But even with the help of the entire village, they could not eat that last piece of sky. Osato had taken too much. "What does it matter?" Osato told herself at last. "Just a bit of waste." But the feeling in the pit of her stomach told her otherwise. No one slept well that night.

The next morning, the sky did not offer his food to the people. Parents had nothing for breakfast. Children cried, hungry. Osato knelt on the ground, rocking and sobbing. "I'm so sorry... "

But the sky just sighed. With a great rush of air, it lifted itself up. High as the treetops. High as the mountaintops.

High above the earth rose the sky, far beyond the reach of humans. "I gave you all you needed," its voice floated down to Osato, "but still you took more. I cannot stand such greed. I must leave. I will not return."

"But how will we live?" wept Osato. "What will we eat?"

There was silence.

Osato's tears fell to the Earth. And the Earth spoke. "Dry your tears," it said gently. "I can feed you. But you will have to work for your living. You will have to learn to plow fields and sow seeds and harvest crops. And remember what you have learned today. Take only what you need. And I will give it gladly."

"Oh, I will," promised Osato through her tears. "I'll never take more than I need—ever, ever again."

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 4: LEADER RESOURCE 1: MURAL IMAGE — SKY**

Nigerian sky taken by Folarin Kolawole, founder of [Naija Treks](#); used with permission.



## FIND OUT MORE

The Center for the New American Dream's monthly e-newsletter, "[In Balance](http://www.newdream.org/news/newsletters/archive/in-balance-november-2011)," (at [www.newdream.org/news/newsletters/archive/in-balance-november-2011](http://www.newdream.org/news/newsletters/archive/in-balance-november-2011)) offers news and information for simplifying family life and reducing your household's impact on the environment.

Marie Sherlock's book, *Living Simply with Children: A Voluntary Simplicity Guide for Moms, Dads, and Kids Who Want to Reclaim the Bliss of Childhood and the Joy of Parenting*, promotes and describes strategies for an anti-consumerist, media aware, ecologically thoughtful family lifestyle.

Visit the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) or the UUA's [Green Sanctuary](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) program to learn how UUs are involved in taking care of the earth.



# SESSION 5: HABITATS

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Nature will bear the closest inspection. She invites us to lay our eye level with her smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain. — Henry David Thoreau, 19th-century Transcendentalist*

This session studies the interdependent web through the lens of "habitat," an environment that supports the life needs of all the plants and creatures living in it. Children think about the many needs a habitat supplies. Through the story "Habitat at Home," children discover ways they can act in their own environment to help animal co-dwellers meet their basic life needs.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Demonstrate the elements of support that people and other organisms need to live
- Evoke empathy for all members of the interdependent web of life
- Foster awe and appreciation for how an ecosystem works
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Talk about human life needs
- Learn the function of habitats
- Discover ways they can support animal habitats, and become inspired to take action.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — Habitat at Home	10
Activity 3: Micro-hike Habitat Walk	20
Activity 4: Pinecone Feeder	15
Faith in Action: Creating Backyard Habitats	60
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: Habitat Show and Tell	15
Alternate Activity 3: Habitat Hike	15

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

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

- What is your habitat? How are your needs met by and in your environment?
- Do you have a favorite place in nature where you feel a part of the interdependent web?
- Take a micro-hike of your own (Activity 3). What did you see on your journey as a tiny creature?

Allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.



## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

— adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we will talk about habitats. A habitat is an area that provides the food, water, and shelter that an animal needs to live.

Ask if anyone has heard the word habitat before, or if they have ever visited one.

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a very wide span in terms of reading abilities; point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the

earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — HABITAT AT HOME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Habitat at Home](#) (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as a picture of a backyard habitat with bird bath, bird feeder, trees
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions and choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, read or tell the story, "Habitat at Home."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion using questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- Do you have a backyard? If you do, what kind of habitat do you have there? What living things could you find there?
- Can a habitat be in a front yard? On a porch or balcony? What kinds of things could you find in each?
- Do you have a favorite place where you can be in nature? Is it close by, or far from home? What do you like about it? Whose habitat is it?
- How can we as Unitarian Universalists care for the animals and plants in a forest, meadow, pond, or other habitat?

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 3: MICRO-HIKE HABITAT WALK (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- String or yarn
- Magnifying glasses

### Preparation for Activity

- Designate a large, outdoor area.
- Cut string or yarn into five-foot lengths.

## Description of Activity

Children explore, using their imaginations.

Give each child a five-foot string or piece of yarn. Ask each child to lay the length of the string on the most interesting ground they can find outside. Tell the group to pretend that they have shrunk to the size of an ant, beetle, or other small creature.

Give each child a magnifying glass. Invite children to explore the ground along their string, using the magnifying glasses. Ask them to keep their eyes not higher than one foot above the ground. If the ground isn't wet, encourage them to lie on their bellies while exploring.

After the micro-hike, invite the children to share their observations:

- What did you see on your journey as a tiny creature?
- Did you see things that you don't normally see? Why or why not?
- Did you know you were in a habitat?
- What do small creatures need to live in their habitat? Did you see any of those things?
- What is the habitat for humans?
- What do humans need to live?
- Would you like to be an ant or small creature for a day? For a week? For a year? Why or why not?

## ACTIVITY 4: PINECONE FEEDER (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Pinecones, at least two for each participant
- String or yarn
- Vegetable shortening, oats, a large mixing bowl, several additional bowls, and spoons
- Bird seed, and several shallow dishes
- Roll of waxed paper

### Preparation for Activity

- Cut string or yarn into three-foot lengths (one for each pinecone).
- Mix shortening and oats in a large bowl. Then, distribute the mixture among additional bowls for children to share, and set a few spoons in each bowl.
- Pour bird seed into several shallow dishes for children to share.

- Tear off about 18 inches of waxed paper as a work surface for each child; later, the children can wrap their finished pinecone feeders in the waxed paper to take home. (If children will make extra pinecone feeders, tear off extra sheets of waxed paper.)
- Set bowls, spoons, and dishes on work tables within easy reach of all participants.
- Optional: Plan to have children make more than one feeder each, and choose a space outside your congregation to hang feeders. As needed, obtain permission from congregational grounds committee and/or staff.

## Description of Activity

Children create a simple bird feeder.

Demonstrate, and then help children as needed:

1. Tie a piece of string or yarn to the top of the pinecone.
2. Create a loop for hanging.
3. Cover the surface of the pinecone with the shortening mixture, filling in the spaces between the scales.
4. Roll the pinecone in the birdseed until it is covered completely.
5. Wrap the pinecone feeder in waxed paper to take home.

Optional: Go outside to hang pinecone feeders at the congregation.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 1, [Mural Image — Backyard Habitat](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1, Mural Image — Backyard Habitat, preferably in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the newsprint with lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

## Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we learned that habitats are areas that provide the food, water, and shelter an animal or plant needs to live. Unitarian Universalists believe that that all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like the web on our mural. Each time we meet we add something new to our World of Wonder mural. Today we add a picture of a backyard habitat, to remind us that we can care for the animals and plants that live in a forest, meadow, pond, or other habitat, and that helps make our interdependent web strong and healthy.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: CREATING BACKYARD HABITATS (60 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Information on backyard habitats

### Preparation for Activity

- Designate a date and time for a family gathering.
- Research how to create backyard habitats. Look for information, ideas, and instructions relevant to your geographic area. Two places to start are the websites of the [National Wildlife Federation](http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Outdoor-Activities/Garden-for-Wildlife.aspx) (at [www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Outdoor-Activities/Garden-for-Wildlife.aspx](http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Outdoor-Activities/Garden-for-Wildlife.aspx)) or a local [Audubon Society chapter](http://audubonportland.org/backyardwildlife/backyardhabitat/) (at [audubonportland.org/backyardwildlife/backyardhabitat/](http://audubonportland.org/backyardwildlife/backyardhabitat/)); print materials to share with families. You might also invite guest speakers who are knowledgeable about backyard habitats.
- Optional: If the congregation participates in the [UUA Green Sanctuary](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml)) program, invite members of that committee to participate in Faith in Action activities as appropriate.

## Description of Activity

Participants and families connect with each other in a way that fosters shared commitment in caring for the earth.

Hold an event to launch participants' families creation of one or multiple backyard habitats at home, at the congregation, or at a local school or other public place.

Consult with the religious educator to choose a date and time for a family gathering. You may wish to invite the wider congregation to participate, too. Arrange for knowledgeable speakers to present information about habitats. If any families already have a certified backyard habitat at home or at a local school, invite them to talk about their project.

At the gathering, introduce the World of Wonder program. Share the story "Habitat at Home" and lead a brief discussion of the story. While the discussion is going on, you may wish to have materials available to create pinecone feeders (Activity 4). Have the speakers present the materials on backyard habitats, emphasizing how creating or improving a habitat contributes to the health of our interdependent web.

If it is feasible to create a certified habitat on congregational grounds, ask for a small group of volunteers to work with the director of religious education or appropriate congregational leaders to develop a plan for next steps. Families may also choose to create their own habitat at home, or work together with local schools to create a schoolyard habitat. Make sure the children are actively engaged in the chosen project.

Close the gathering by having the children lead the song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands". Make plans to communicate with families and the wider congregation about next steps and after the work has been done, to share their experiences.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately after the session, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? What information or help do we need?

- How was the timing? How can sessions work better within our time frame?
- Is our program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we do differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

Nature will bear the closest inspection. She invites us to lay our eye level with her smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain. — Henry David Thoreau, 19th-century Transcendentalist

If you want to save animals, you have to save the Earth, and to do that, you have to be green. — Marisa Kitchell, age 12, member of First Parish UU, Arlington, MA

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we learned that habitats are environments that support all the needs of the plants and animals that live there.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** how buildings and cities are part of human habitats. Where do you find water, food, shelter? If you find all these life-sustaining elements inside your home, does that mean your habitat *is* your home? Or is your habitat really a larger area surrounding your home? Where do the life supports you need actually come from?

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...** choosing an outdoor area near your home and keeping a list of all the animals you see there this week. How does the habitat support them? Where do they find shelter, food, water? Would the animals' lives be different in a different season? Do you see migratory birds, for example?

**A Family Adventure.** The next time you go to a zoo or animal park, notice how similar the created habitat is to the animal's natural habitat. Ask the zoologists how the zoo chooses what to include and what is unfeasible or unnecessary?

**Family Discovery.** Do you have outdoor space near your home? Find out what animals live there. Could you attract more animals by changing the environment (e.g., could you install a window box with flowers that butterflies or hummingbirds love)? If there are animals you do not want visiting you, how can you change the environment so they stay away? Some ideas are playing a recording of a quiet cougar hiss out your window at night to keep skunks away, or planting vegetables in your garden that you know deer do not like.

The Family pages insert in the Fall 2012 *UU World* magazine has the theme "[All God's Creatures... Even the Bat!](http://www.uua.org/re/families/153856.shtml)" (at [www.uua.org/re/families/153856.shtml](http://www.uua.org/re/families/153856.shtml)) Learn how human activity has disrupted bats' habitats. Find out what some people are doing to help, and ways you and your child can get involved.

**A Family Ritual.** If you have pets, discuss how they would get their needs met if they lived in the wild. Why must we remember to feed our pets and clean up their waste?

To the extent that it is polite, visit friends in their homes—and invite them to your home—to see one another in your "natural habitats." Does seeing a friend's living space help you understand the whole person and what their life is really like?

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.
- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.
2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.



Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: HABITAT SHOW AND TELL (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Natural items such as pinecones, leaves, moss, seeds, twigs, and galls
- A large cloth

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Clear a floor space where the group can sit in a circle.

### **Description of Activity**

Place the natural items you have gathered on a cloth on the floor or a low table. Say in these words or your own:

Here are some things that are found in a habitat. A habitat is the place where animals or plants are normally found.

As you hold the items up, ask questions such as these:

- What kind of habitat might this come from?
- Does it come from a pond habitat? A forest habitat? How about a field habitat? Could it come from a backyard? Is a backyard a habitat? Whose habitat could a backyard be?
- What animal might use this? Could an animal use it for food or for shelter? For example, many birds and squirrels eat pinecones, nuts, seeds, or berries; many birds might use thistles, twigs, leaves, moss or fur for nest building.

If you have galls to show, explain that they are a very tiny habitat, or micro-habitat. Galls are parts of a plant—usually a stem or leaf—where a wasp, fly, or other insect lays its eggs. The bulge in the plant part is from swelling after the wasp splits the stem or leaf and inserts its eggs. The gall is a little nest for the eggs and has all the food, shelter, water and space that the hatching insects or larvae need for the first stage of their lives.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: HABITAT HIKE (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Lunch-sized paper bags, cloth bags, or small baggies, one per child

- Optional: Flashlights, magnifying glasses, or handheld dental mirrors

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Inform families of your plan to bring the children outdoors. Arrange all necessary details, such as transportation, permission slips, sunscreen, insect repellent, and appropriate clothing.
- Select an appropriate location for your nature walk in consultation with the director of religious education. If you have a wood, field, stream, or pond nearby, plan an excursion there for your session.
- Make sure you can recognize poison ivy. Learn about any venomous or otherwise dangerous creatures in your local habitat and how to avoid them.
- Determine whether anyone is allergic to bee stings, pollen, or other outdoor allergens and plan accordingly.

### **Description of Activity**

Take a walk outside. Ask the children, what they think a habitat is. They may know that it's the place where animals and plants are normally found. Tell them the place where they are hiking is a habitat—an environment where many plants and creatures live. As you walk, ask them to use their senses to observe the living things in the habitat, both animals and plants. Offer them magnifying glasses to get a closer look.

Ask them what they think living things need to stay alive in their habitat. They may know that most animals need water, food, shelter, and air to live. They may not know that plants need food (or nutrients from the soil), water, sunlight, and air. Tell them that even the bark of a tree can be a very tiny habitat for very small creatures. Ask them what animals might live in that habitat.

Say, in these words or your own:

Ants, beetles and spiders love to call the bark of a tree their home. They eat even smaller insects that also live there or maybe parts of the tree itself. Even a blade of grass can be home to several different animals.

As you hike, ask the children to look for evidence of shelter, food, and water—critical supports that animals need to survive in their habitat.

Look for nests of birds, squirrels, mice, or other small mammals, which are examples of shelter. A hollow log or a brush pile might be shelter for many critters, including opossums, rabbits, and snakes.

Some signs of food would be leaves, nuts, seeds, berries, mushrooms, insects, and of course other

animals. Ask children if they knew that box turtles love to nibble on mushrooms.

Ask them to look for signs of water. Is there a stream or pond? If not, where else could animals get water? A small animal might need just a little bit of water. Look for leaves that are curled or shaped like cups that will hold the morning dew for a lizard, chipmunk or bird to drink from.

Invite the children to use four of their senses during the hike—their eyes, ears, nose, and (with care) touch. Remind them not to use their sense of taste, unless you have brought a snack or beverage safe for everyone to try.

When you have completed your walk, process the activity with questions like:

- I wonder what you enjoyed the most about our walk.
- I wonder if there was anything on our walk that made you say, "Wow!"

### **Including All Participants**

Determine whether there are any relevant allergies in the group, such as bee stings or pollen, and plan accordingly.

If you have a participant who uses a wheelchair or has limited mobility, select a location that is accessible, with paved paths.

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 5: STORY: HABITAT AT HOME

By Julie Simon.

Kylie groaned on the sofa. Her best friend Georgia was sick. It was Saturday, and the girls had planned to ride their bikes to Sundale Preserve that morning. But Georgia had a sore throat. Kylie had been looking forward to the trip all week. Sundale was her favorite place to go on weekends. She and Georgia could ride there without a grown-up if they stayed on the bike trail.

The park was amazing. It had lots of space for exploring—flower gardens, fields, woods, a pond, and a stream. Kylie loved looking for the animals—fish, birds, lizards, and her favorite, butterflies. There was even a bat box that bats roosted in during the day and left at dusk. In the summer, Kylie would pick and eat wild blackberries, cool her feet in the bubbling stream, and watch turtles sunning on logs in the pond.

The animals in the park had everything they needed to live—plants and other animals for food, places for shelter and nesting, and the pond and stream for water.

Kylie's kindergarten teacher called the Sundale Preserve a wildlife habitat. Earlier in the year, Kylie's whole class had helped plant milkweed in the garden for butterfly food. Last weekend, Kylie and Georgia had seen tiny, golden eggs clinging to the leaves of some milkweed plants. She wanted to see if any of them had hatched into caterpillars yet.

Unfortunately, Sundale was too far for her to ride to without her friend. Kylie had graduated from training wheels more than a year ago, but she had just turned six years old last month. Her mom offered to walk with her, but she didn't really want to go without Georgia.

So instead she moped on the sofa.

"Why don't you go look for caterpillars in the backyard?" her dad suggested.

"We don't have caterpillars in our yard," Kylie said.

"How do you know unless you look?" he asked.

"But you need milkweed plants for caterpillars," said Kylie. "And we don't have those."

"Hmmm? We had caterpillars last year," said Kylie's dad. "Don't you remember they ate up my parsley last summer? I planted extra parsley plants this year, just so we could have some for the caterpillars and some for us to eat."

Kylie had forgotten about that. Then she got an idea. She would go look for caterpillars in the backyard and also look to see if there was a spot where they could plant their own milkweed to feed the butterflies. Kylie smiled and raced outside.

She headed straight for the veggie patch where the parsley was growing. Sure enough, a tiny, black caterpillar with a white band around the middle was climbing along a stem. She also spotted tiny eggs the color of butter on the leaves.

Then she raced back inside the house. "Dad, can we plant milkweed for the butterflies today so they can have food this summer?" she asked.

"Well, I'm pretty sure they already have some food out back. Remember, they loved gathering nectar from the coneflowers and asters last summer. We can plant some milkweed next spring. I think milkweed is what Monarch butterflies need for their eggs and caterpillars. We can also put out ripe fruit and see if the butterflies sip nectar from it."

"Ok. But today could we also dig a butterfly bath? And put out some basking rocks?" asked Kylie. She had learned that butterflies like to have "puddle parties" in shallow pools with muddy edges and they need heat-holding places to rest and sun their wings so they can warm up on cool mornings."

"Sure," he said. "Let's go look for some flat rocks and find a good, sunny spot."

Kylie was excited. She couldn't wait create their new backyard habitat for butterflies.



## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 5: LEADER RESOURCE 1: MURAL IMAGE — BACKYARD HABITAT

From the website of the [North Carolina Wildlife Federation](http://www.ncwildlife.org/); used with permission.



## FIND OUT MORE

The Family pages insert in the Fall 2012 *UU World* magazine has the theme "[All God's Creatures... Even the Bat!](#)" (at [www.uua.org/re/families/153856.shtml](http://www.uua.org/re/families/153856.shtml)) Learn how human activity has disrupted bats' habitats. Find out what some people are doing to help and ways you and your child can get involved.

Many children's magazines focus on habitats and the environment, and the National Wildlife Federation's [Big Backyard](#) (at [www.nwf.org/kids/big-backyard.aspx](http://www.nwf.org/kids/big-backyard.aspx)) is one rich source. Also, the National Wildlife Federation offers [habitat programs](#) (at [www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Outdoor-Activities/Garden-for-Wildlife.aspx](http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Outdoor-Activities/Garden-for-Wildlife.aspx)) to try at home or school.

The April 2011 issue of [Muse Magazine](#) (at [www.musemagkids.com/](http://www.musemagkids.com/)) (available in most public libraries) had an interesting article about "ugly" animals, including a debate about whether saving habitats for humans' favorite animals would also benefit these other animals or if human dislike of these animals placed them at risk of extinction.

Visit the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](#) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) or the UUA's [Green Sanctuary](#) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) program to learn how UUs are involved in taking care of the earth.

# SESSION 6: LIFECYCLES

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Awaken to the universe's simple gift of the butterfly. Watch with fascination and joy as a jeweled treasure glides by and gently touches your soul. — Kristen D'Angelo, freelance writer, blogger, and photographer*

This session introduces the mystery and wonder of life cycles through the concept of metamorphosis. This age group is fascinated by the "magic" that turns a caterpillar into a butterfly, or a tadpole into a frog. The central story, "A Caterpillar Grows Up," describes the awe and wonder one family feels when they watch the metamorphosis of a cabbage worm into a butterfly. For kinesthetic learners, the children embody the life cycle of a frog. The Faith in Action activity introduces the concept of "citizen scientists," offered in the book, *Citizen Scientists*, by Unitarian Universalist Loree Griffin Burns.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Lift up science as a Source in Unitarian Universalism, by teaching the changes that occur in the life cycles of butterflies and frogs
- Foster awe and wonder toward the process of metamorphosis
- Empower participants as leaders in the group
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Experience the life cycle of a butterfly through a story
- Embody the life cycle of a frog

- Learn the word "metamorphosis" and understand the concept
- Perform leadership roles.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — A Caterpillar Grows Up	10
Activity 3: Frog Metamorphosis	20
Activity 4: Egg Carton Caterpillars	15
Faith in Action: Citizen Scientists	60
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: Life Cycle Nature Walk	30
Alternate Activity 3: Metamorphosis Video	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

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

- Read the story, "A Caterpillar Grows Up." Do you remember when you first learned about metamorphosis? What feelings come up for you?
- On what ways have you experienced metamorphosis in your own life?

Allow your sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

— adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Did you ever wonder about how caterpillars become butterflies and tadpoles become frogs? Today we will learn about metamorphosis, an amazing thing that happens to some creatures in our interdependent web.

Ask if anyone has heard the word "cocoon" or the word "chrysalis" before and know what it is.

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a very wide span in terms of reading abilities; point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.



Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — A CATERPILLAR GROWS UP (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[A Caterpillar Grows Up](#) (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as a caterpillar, cabbage leaf, butterfly, or flower, or pictures of these items
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions and choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, read or tell the story, "A Caterpillar Grows Up."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion with questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- Have you ever watched a caterpillar grow into a butterfly? What did you see?
- I wonder what it would feel like to be wrapped in a cocoon.
- I wonder what kinds of changes you will go through as you grow up.

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 3: FROG METAMORPHOSIS (20 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Designate a large space, preferably outdoors.
- Communicate to families that children should come dressed for outdoor fun (in clothes that can get dirty).
- Practice the body motions so you can demonstrate them for the children.

### Description of Activity

Participants act out the life cycle of a frog.

Gather the children in a circle. Tell them that they are going to become frogs today. Ask if they know what a frog is when it starts life and where frogs are usually found. Usually someone will know that frogs start as eggs in a pond; some will say a tadpole.

Say in these words or your own:

Now we are ready to become frogs. Follow me and do what I do.

Frogs start as a tiny glistening egg placed in the pond by a mama frog. [Crouch down in a ball.]

The glistening eggs hatch into little tiny tadpoles.

[Rise part of the way up, but stay halfway bent over.]

We tadpoles swim quickly around, darting here and there in the pond looking for food.

[Put two hands together and point them from the lower back like a tadpole tail.]

What's next? We become froglets when our legs begin to grow.

[Put hands along the hips and out to back for back legs then put hands in along ribcage near the shoulders for front legs.]

Froglets still have a tail, but it's getting shorter and shorter. As we become grown-up frogs, we will be able to travel on land. I think you know how frogs move around on land—show me!

[Crouch down again and hop onto land and all around.]

Some frogs live on mainly on land and some still live in the pond, but all frogs are always looking for a tasty mea—I—mosquitoes and other good things to eat.

[Stick out tongues to catch mosquitos.] Glump!

Now, let's hear from our chorus of frogs!

[Invite children to make frog sounds.]

As time and interest allow, repeat the process of metamorphosis.

## ACTIVITY 4: EGG CARTON CATERPILLARS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Empty, cardboard dozen egg cartons, pipe cleaners and a pencil, and markers or crayons
- Optional: Googly eyes and glue
- Optional: Coffee filters, and watercolor paints and brushes

### Preparation for Activity

- Cut the egg cartons in half, the long way. You will need a six-section strip for each child.
- Set out markers, crayons (or paint)
- Optional: Watch a [video that demonstrates how to make an egg carton caterpillar](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3v7zBJRdSY) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3v7zBJRdSY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3v7zBJRdSY)).
- Optional: Go to the Kaboose website for [instructions for making coffee filter butterflies](http://crafts.kaboose.com/butterfly1.html) (at [crafts.kaboose.com/butterfly1.html](http://crafts.kaboose.com/butterfly1.html)).

### Description of Activity

Children create a caterpillar to take home.

Give each child a half of an egg carton (six sections, attached in a line). Have the children use crayons or markers to color the outside. When the caterpillar is ready for its antennae, an adult should poke two holes in the "head" section and help the child thread the pipe cleaner through the holes to create antennae. Then, pipe cleaners can be curled around a pencil. Children can either draw eyes or glue on "googly eyes."

Optional: Invite and help the children to make coffee filter butterflies.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 1, [Mural Image — Butterfly](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1, Mural Image — Butterfly, preferably in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the newsprint with lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

### Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we learned that metamorphosis is the way in which caterpillars become butterflies and tadpoles become frogs. Unitarian Universalists

believe that that all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like the web on our mural. Each time we meet we add something new to our World of Wonder mural. Today we add a picture of butterfly to remind us of the mystery and wonder of metamorphosis.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: CITIZEN SCIENTISTS (60 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Citizen Scientists: Be a Part of Scientific Discovery from Your Own Backyard by Unitarian Universalist Loree Griffin Burns
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1

### Preparation for Activity

- Purchase the book, or borrow it from a library. Obtain a few copies, if possible. Check the author's [website](http://www.loreeburns.com/) (at [www.loreeburns.com/](http://www.loreeburns.com/)) for more information.
- Read the book's introduction, "What Is a Citizen Scientist, Anyway?" Prepare to present its ideas to a gathering of families.

### Description of Activity

Review seasonal projects suggested in Burns' book, and select one appropriate for your locale and the time of year. The projects include Fall Butterflying (tagging Monarch butterflies), Winter Birding (counting birds for the Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count), Spring Frogging (monitoring frog population for the Frog Watch program), and Summer Ladybugging (ladybug spotting for the Lost Ladybug Project). The book offers instructions and resources for these projects. Find alternate projects at [Citizen Science Central](http://Citizen Science Central) (at [www.birds.cornell.edu/citscitoolkit/projects](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/citscitoolkit/projects)) or [Science for Citizens](http://Science for Citizens) (at [scistarter.com/index.html](http://scistarter.com/index.html)).

Choose a date and time for a family gathering. You might invite the wider congregation to participate as well.

Decide who will lead the introduction and discussion of *Citizen Scientist*. You may wish to talk with congregation members who are elementary science teachers, scientists, or naturalists and invite them to participate. If the congregation participates in the [UUA Green](http://UUA Green)

[Sanctuary](http://Sanctuary) (at [www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml)) program, invite members of that committee to participate. If any families already participate in Citizen Science projects at home or at school, invite them to talk about their project.

Families of the World of Wonder group connect with each other in a way that fosters shared commitment in caring for the earth, by becoming involved with Citizen Science projects.

When families have gathered, introduce the concept of citizen scientists by reading or paraphrasing from the book. Describe the project you have chosen. Solicit input from families to build support and help shape the project. Make plans to communicate with families and the wider congregation about next steps and after the work has been done, to share their experiences.

Close the gathering by asking the children to lead the song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately after the session, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? What information or help do we need?
- How was the timing? How can sessions work better within our time frame?
- Is our program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we do differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

Awaken to the universe's simple gift of the butterfly. Watch with fascination and joy as a jeweled treasure glides by and gently touches your soul. — Kristen D'Angelo, freelance writer, blogger, and photographer

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we learned about metamorphosis in both butterflies and frogs. We heard the story "A Caterpillar Grows Up," made egg carton caterpillars, and role-played the life cycle of a frog.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** the life cycles of other creatures, such as dragonflies. Make the comparison to human birth and growth; consult the UUA's Kindergarten/1stGrade [Our Whole Lives Sexuality \(OWL\)](#) (at [www.uua.org/re/owl/](http://www.uua.org/re/owl/)) Education program for resources.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...**

**A Family Adventure.** The Faith in Action activity for this session invites families to become citizen scientists, as described in UU [Loree Griffin Burns](#) (at [www.loreeburns.com/](http://www.loreeburns.com/))' book, [Citizen Scientists: Be a Part of Scientific Discovery from Your Own Backyard](#) (at [www.amazon.com/Citizen-Scientists-Scientific-Discovery-Backyard/dp/0805095179/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1335889712&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/Citizen-Scientists-Scientific-Discovery-Backyard/dp/0805095179/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1335889712&sr=8-1)). Read the book together and choose a project.

**Family Discovery.** Watch nature shows, such as PBS Nature, Planet Earth or Life. Many wonderful videos show metamorphosis in time-lapse photography. On YouTube, watch [Monarch Butterfly](#) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUSKxWMIh0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUSKxWMIh0)) Life Cycle (2:11) or [Frog Life Cycle](#) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_MupYQMAaKA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MupYQMAaKA)) (2:22).

**A Family Game.** Try a guided meditation or some creative movement to act out the metamorphosis of a frog or a butterfly. You'll find a Butterfly Soul Awakening meditation [here](#) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSvF-KSg0J4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSvF-KSg0J4)). [Maureen Garth's meditation books](#) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=maureen+garth](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=maureen+garth)) for children include *Earthlight*, *Moonbeam*, *Starbright*, *Sunshine*, and *Inner Garden*. An *Examiner* article explains how to [use poetry to inspire creative movement](#) (at [www.examiner.com/article/butterfly-poetry-enriches-children-s-creative-movement](http://www.examiner.com/article/butterfly-poetry-enriches-children-s-creative-movement)).

**A Family Ritual.** Make time each week to go for a nature walk with your family, even if it's only to your own back yard. Find ways to nurture your family's sense of wonder each day.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.
- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.
2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.

Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LIFE CYCLE NATURE WALK (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Flashlights, magnifying glasses, or handheld dental mirrors

### Preparation for Activity

- Inform families of your plan to bring the children outdoors. Arrange all necessary details, such as transportation, permission slips, sunscreen, insect repellent, and appropriate clothing.
- Select an appropriate location for your nature walk in consultation with the religious educator.



If you have a wood, field, stream, or pond nearby, plan an excursion there.

- Make sure you can recognize poison ivy. Learn about any venomous or otherwise dangerous creatures in your local habitat and how to avoid them.
- Determine whether anyone is allergic to bee stings, pollen, or other outdoor allergens and plan accordingly.

### Description of Activity

Participants experience nature directly.

Take a walk outside. Ask the children what they think a lifecycle is. Say, in these words or your own:

Lifecycles are the stages that an animal goes through as it grows up. They usually start out eggs, then they become baby animals, then grown-ups. But some animals, like frogs and butterflies, have a baby animal stage that doesn't look anything like the grown-ups.

Tell them as you walk you're going to be nature detectives and you'll look for evidence or clues of animals of any stage, living or traveling where you walk. Look for nests of all kinds (insects, birds, squirrels). Talk about the homes animals have as they are babies and when they grow up to be adults. Look for spider webs, log piles, holes in the ground, tree branches, and other places that might be home to an animal at some stage of its life.

After your walk, process with questions such as:

- I wonder what you enjoyed the most about our walk?
- I wonder if there was anything on our walk that made you say, "Wow!"

### Including All Participants

Determine whether there are any relevant allergies within your group, such as bee stings or pollen, and plan accordingly.

If you have a child who uses a wheelchair or has limited mobility, select a location that is accessible, with paved paths.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: METAMORPHOSIS VIDEO (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A computer with Internet access, and a large monitor or a digital projector

### Preparation for Activity

- Set up the equipment and test the Internet connection. Preview the YouTube video(s) [Monarch Butterfly](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUSKxWMIh0) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUSKxWMIh0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUSKxWMIh0)) Life Cycle (2:11) and [Frog Life Cycle](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MupYQMAaKA) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_MupYQMAaKA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MupYQMAaKA)) (2:22), and cue them to show the children.

### Description of Activity

These two short videos show the metamorphoses of a Monarch butterfly and a frog, in time-lapse photography. You might play these during while the children create egg carton caterpillars (Activity 4).

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 6: STORY: A CATERPILLAR GROWS UP**

Adapted from *The Family Finds Out* by Edith Hunter (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

Ellen was sitting up on a branch of the apple tree, swinging her legs. Her mother was looking over the vegetable garden.

"Want to see a nice fat green worm?" her mother called.

Ellen jumped down from the tree and ran over.

"I guess that's a cabbage worm," said her mom. "He's sitting on a cabbage leaf. See the big holes he's eaten in the leaf?"

"He's just the same color as the leaf," said Ellen. "He's hard to see."

"I suppose there are a lot more of these worms around," said her mother. "They don't help us a bit, because they eat the cabbages."

"Would that worm grow up to be a butterfly, like a caterpillar does?" asked Ellen.

"I guess so," said her mother. "I suppose that really is a cabbage caterpillar, not a worm, and there *are* cabbage butterflies. You know those yellow ones with big black spots?"

"Do you think we could keep him, Mommy, and watch him grow up?" asked Ellen. "Maybe we could see him turn into a butterfly!"

"We could try it, Ellen. We know what he eats. You could feed him cabbage leaves every day."

"Let's show him to Daddy," said Ellen. "Maybe we can find something to keep him in." She ran off into the house holding the green cabbage caterpillar close in her hand.

Her father was working in the kitchen. "See my caterpillar, Daddy," said Ellen. "I'm going to watch him grow up into a butterfly. Would you help me find a house for him?"

"Let's build him a house right now," he said. "I have four small panes of window glass. We can use those for the sides of the house, and a piece of screen for the top of the house, and some wood for the floor of the house."

In just a few minutes they had made a fine large glass house and Ellen put the caterpillar right in. They put the screen over the top.

"You can pull up one little cabbage plant each day to feed your caterpillar," said her father. "There are more plants growing in the garden than we will ever be able to

use. Probably if you wet the leaves before you put them in, he'll get enough water. We'll keep his glass house on the living-room table, so we can all see what happens to him."

Ellen ran right out into the yard and her mom helped her pull up one baby cabbage plant. Ellen brought it in and wet the leaves. Then she put it into the glass house.

"There you are, Mr. Caterpillar! I hope you'll grow up to be a butterfly soon," said Ellen.

For three days the caterpillar crawled around inside his glass house. Ellen put in fresh cabbage leaves each day. He seemed to be fine. On the third day he crawled up the glass on one side of his house. About half way up, he stopped.

When her parents came home from work that night Ellen said, "My caterpillar is just sitting on the side of his house. He hasn't moved all day. Do you think he's dead?"

They looked at the caterpillar. He seemed rather dried up. He wasn't moving at all. "But if he were dead," said her father, "I should think he would fall down. We'll just have to wait and see. I never raised a butterfly before."

"You know," said her mother, "when a caterpillar is nearly ready to become a butterfly he stays very still for a while. Sometimes he spins a cocoon, or he buries himself in the ground, or he just sits quietly in his old skin. They call him a chrysalis when he's doing that. Then, when he's ready, he comes out a butterfly."

They decided that either their caterpillar was a chrysalis now or he was dead. For about a week he didn't seem to change much, except he got a little smaller looking. He didn't look like a caterpillar any more even, just a dried up little skin.

A few days later, Ellen was standing in front of the glass house, wondering if anything was ever going to happen to that old caterpillar. Suddenly she noticed something! "Mom, Dad" she called. "I think I can see yellow wings inside. I'm sure I can."

Her parents came into the living room quickly.

"See," said Ellen, "there are two tiny yellow wings all folded up in there. I see some black spots too. Do you think he is going to come out and be a butterfly now?"

"I guess that is exactly what is going to happen," said her mother. "Why, this is the most wonderful thing I have ever seen! Let's take the glass house out on the porch. We'll watch the butterfly come out."

They put the caterpillar's house on the porch railing and sat down beside it. They waited and waited and waited. Nothing seemed to be happening.

"Maybe it will take a long time still," said her father. "I guess we better not just sit here the rest of the day. Let's

go weed the beets and then come back and take a look."

After they had worked for a little while, Ellen said, "I'm going to go see the chrysalis for a minute," and she ran up onto the porch.

"Oh, look!" she called to her parents. "He's a butterfly, already! He's come out. He's beautiful!"

They came running. Instead of a dried-up old worm, there was a beautiful creamy yellow butterfly! His wings looked soft as silk. They were much, much bigger than the little wings that Ellen had seen all folded up. Now the butterfly was flapping them back and forth, back and forth.

"Oh, I'm so sorry we missed seeing him come out of the chrysalis," said her dad. "I shouldn't have been in such a hurry. But isn't he a beauty? See his long tongue! He can reach way down in the flowers with that." The butterfly kept unrolling his tongue, and then rolling it up again.

"I'm going to take off the roof of his house now," said Ellen, "so he can fly away if he's ready." The butterfly did not fly away right away.

Then after a minute her mother slipped her finger down next to him. Carefully he put out one of his long legs, his long new butterfly legs, and stepped onto her finger.

Then Ellen put her finger next to her mother's. Once again the butterfly reached out a long leg, and stepped out onto Ellen's finger. Ellen lifted up her hand carefully. She held the butterfly out over the porch, in the bright afternoon sun.

For a moment he clung to her finger. And then, opening out his silken wings, he flapped them gently and rose up in the air.

"Fly away, fly away, butterfly dear," Ellen and her parents sang as the lovely yellow butterfly flew off. They watched him fly across the street to the meadow.

"He's landing!" said Ellen. "He's landed on a meadow flower!"

It made them glad to see their very own brand-new butterfly having his first drink of the sweetness of a flower.

**WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 6:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: MURAL IMAGE — BUTTERFLY**



## FIND OUT MORE

Visit the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) or the UUA's [Green Sanctuary](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) program to learn how UUs are involved in taking care of the earth.

# SESSION 7: DECOMPOSITION

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Life is like a compost heap. The rotting debris of everyday trials just keeps piling up... but if we wait long enough and remain steadfast and strong, even the stinkiest pile will bear good and worthwhile things. — posted on the [Earth Friendly Gardening blog](#) (at [earthfriendlygardening.wordpress.com/2006/05/06/silly-saturday-fun-compost-quotes/](#)), author unknown*

Children continue exploring circles of life by studying decomposition. The story, "And It Is Good," shows the important role decomposition plays in the cycle of life. The main activity is the creation of an Earthworm Wonderland. The Faith in Action activity and Alternate Activity 1 engage the children in a congregational composting project.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce decomposition's role in the cycle of life
- Teach children how to compost with worms
- Empower participants as leaders in the group
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Respond to a story that demonstrates the importance of decomposition in the cycle of life
- Become familiar with decomposition by creating a worm composting project
- Experience a creative expression of decomposition by making a cacophony together
- Perform leadership roles.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — And It Is Good	10
Activity 3: Earthworm Wonderland	25
Activity 4: Decomposition Chorus	10
Faith in Action: Worm Composting Bins	60
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: A Visit to the Compost Bin	15
Alternate Activity 2: Decomposers Hike	25
Alternate Activity 3: Log Dissection	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

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

- Consider this session's opening quote: "Life is like a compost heap. The rotting debris of everyday trials just keeps piling up... but if we wait long enough and remain steadfast and strong, even the stinkiest pile will bear good and worthwhile things." What are some of the items piled in your metaphorical compost heap? What "stinky" items have borne good and worthwhile things?
- Do you have a physical compost heap? If not, is it a project you might begin?

Allow your sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table with a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

— adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we will talk about decomposition. Have you heard that word before? Do any of you have a compost pile at home? Decomposition is what happens after plants or animals die and become part of the earth again. Sometimes we call it rotting. It's another way that everything is connected in our interdependent web.

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a wide span in reading ability. Point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the

earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — AND IT IS GOOD (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[And It Is Good](#) (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as seeds, or a toy mouse, snake, or hawk (or pictures of these creatures)
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions. Choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, read or tell the story, "And It Is Good."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion with questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- Have you ever wondered what happens to animals when they die in the wild?
- Have you ever seen a decomposing plant? How about a rotting log?
- Do you have a compost pile at home? If so, what do you put in it?
- What do you think happens to a tree that dies and falls to the floor in a forest?
- What kind of creatures might help it decompose (or rot)?
- What would happen if we didn't have decomposers like beetles, maggots, fungus and bacteria?

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 3: EARTHWORM WONDERLAND (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Caring for Your Earthworm Wonderland](#) (included in this document)
- For each participant: A large, wide-mouth, glass jar with a metal lid; an aluminum can (with one end removed) that will fit inside the closed jar



and is about half the jar's size; soft, damp soil; a spoon; and 8-10 worms

- Black construction paper; color chalk; and tape
- Scissors, hammer, and nails (for adult use)

### Preparation for Activity

- Obtain supplies. Worms can be purchased from a variety of local sources.
- Make a sample wonderland.
- Recruit additional adult helpers for this session.
- Copy Handout 1, Caring for Your Earthworm Wonderland, for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Tell the children they will each make an "earthworm wonderland." Say in these words or your own:

Worms are decomposers. They help turn garbage into soil and keep the soil loose and aerated, by burrowing through it. They make soil by eating compost, things like vegetable trimmings and grass clippings, and leaving behind their own waste called castings (aka worm poo). Worm poo is soft and fine and perfect for gardening.

Instruct the children to put the aluminum can, open end down, inside the jar. Next, spoon moist soil around the can, so the can stays in the center and the soil fills the area around it (the can keeps the worms on the outside of the jar so you can view them).

When the jar is full, add the worms. Help any children who are uncomfortable handling the worms. The worms will burrow into the soil within a few minutes. Have an adult punch several holes in the jar lid with a hammer and nails, so the worms can get air. Label each lid with the child's name.

Have an adult cut the black construction paper to fit around the jar. Tell the children to decorate one side with interesting designs using color chalks. Tape the ends together to make a ring that fits around the jar. Leave the black paper shade covering the jar for a few minutes. Ask the children what they think is happening in the jar while it is covered (the worms will burrow next to the glass, so you will be able to see them better).

After a few minutes, tell the children to slide the paper shade up and spend some time watching the worms. Point out how quickly they burrow away from the light when you are watching them. Slide the shade back down over the glass when you are finished. Distribute Handout 1, Caring for Your Earthworm Wonderland. Tell the children they may take home their jar, shade, and handout.

### Including All Participants

Some children will be eager to handle the worms, while others may be afraid. Allow each to choose their level of contact. Remind children to handle the worms gently, and with respect.

## ACTIVITY 4: DECOMPOSITION CHORUS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, [Decomposition Chorus Lyrics](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 2 for all participants.
- Decide whether the children will do this piece as a song, a rap, or a reading.
- Optional: Plan the motions you wish children to use for the chorus (make up your own), and plan to teach them.
- Optional: Recruit a song leader.

### Description of Activity

Children perform a fun song (or rap, or reading) that explains decomposition.

Teach everyone the three parts of the chorus with the respective hand motions (or, alternate motions you have made up). If the group is large enough, form three small groups to sing the three different chorus parts simultaneously.

**Group 1:** Muncha, muncha, muncha. Muncha, muncha, muncha...

**Motion 1:** Make hands into little munching mouths that move to the beat of "muncha, muncha, muncha."

**Group 2:** Decomposition, decomposition, decomposition...

**Motion 2:** Gently pound fist into hand to the beat of the decomposition.

**Group 3:** I get down, I break down...

**Motion 3:** Do the wiggle. Wiggle your body down, as you bring each arm one after the other overhead and down in front of your body. Keep your hands in a fist with the thumbs out and pointed down. Keep going.

Once the children are ready to perform their parts of the chorus, sing, rap, or say the verses, indicating to the children when it is time for their chorus parts and accompanying motions. Feel free to make up new motions. Have fun!

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 1, [Mural Image — Worm Bin](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1, Mural Image — Worm Bin, preferably in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the newsprint with lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

### Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we learned about decomposition and how important it is in the web of life. Unitarian Universalists believe all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like the web on our mural. Each time we meet we add something new to our World of Wonder mural. Today we add a picture of a worm bin to remind us that decomposition—or, composting—is one way we can help make our interdependent web strong and healthy.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: WORM COMPOSTING BINS (60 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Instructions for families to take home, and (optional) appropriate materials
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1

- Optional: Handout 2, [Decomposition Chorus Lyrics](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Find out whether your congregation already has a composting bin. If it does, make this activity a workshop to show families how to make a compost bin (worm or other type) for home use. If it does not, make one for the congregation together and, if you wish, provide instructions and materials for families to make their own at home.
- Choose the type of compost bin to make. Gather the appropriate materials. Instructions for worm composting can be found [here](#) (at [www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Outdoor-Activities/Garden-for-Wildlife/Gardening-Tips/How-to-Build-a-Worm-Compost-Bin.aspx](http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Outdoor-Activities/Garden-for-Wildlife/Gardening-Tips/How-to-Build-a-Worm-Compost-Bin.aspx)) or [here](#) (at [cassandra-truax.suite101.com/building-a-worm-compost-bin-a127077](http://cassandra-truax.suite101.com/building-a-worm-compost-bin-a127077)). Instructions for other types of compost bins can be found [here](#) (at [www.composting101.com/building-a-bin-article.html](http://www.composting101.com/building-a-bin-article.html)) or [here](#) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWEvqfERPMo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWEvqfERPMo)).
- Choose a date for the activity in consultation with the religious educator and appropriate congregational leaders.
- Communicate the event to the World of Wonder families and, if you wish, the wider congregation. If the congregation participates in the [Green Sanctuary](#) (at [www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml)) program, invite members of that committee to participate.
- Optional: Copy Handout 2, Decomposition Chorus Lyrics for all participants.

### Description of Activity

Children practice leadership and stewardship of the web of life by building worm compost bins for the congregation (or helping their families build compost bins for home use).

Build a congregational or a demonstration compost bin together. One family might like to take home the demonstration bin. To encourage families to replicate this project at home, provide materials they will need and create instruction handouts.

Have volunteers take photographs or video to document the project.

Optional: Teach and lead the Decomposition Chorus (Handout 2) to this multi-age group. Offer participants a copy of Handout 2 and ask the children to teach the motions.

At the close of the event, ask the World of Wonder children to lead participants in the song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

Share the photos or video with the children in a subsequent session.

### Including All Participants

Ensure that the shared work area is accessible to all.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately after the session, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? What information or help do we need?
- How was the timing? How can sessions work better within our time frame?
- Is our program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we do differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

Life is like a compost heap. The rotting debris of everyday trials just keeps piling up... but if we wait long enough and remain steadfast and strong, even the stinkiest pile will bear good and worthwhile things. — posted on the [Earth Friendly Gardening blog](#) (at [earthfriendlygardening.wordpress.com/2006/05/06/silly-saturday-fun-compost-quotes/](#)), author unknown

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we explored decomposition and its important role in the web of life. We made Earthworm Wonderlands and talked about composting. We had fun with the Decomposition Chorus.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER.** Explore the Earthworm Wonderland your child brought home. After studying the worms, release them outside in a back yard, garden, or public green space. Find more wonderful activities in Laurie Carlson's book, *EcoArt!*

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER.** Set up a worm compost bin or other type of composting at home. Resources can be found in the Faith in Action activity. If you already do this at home, find guidance on the [TLC website](#) (at [tlc.howstuffworks.com/home/composting-program-kids-school.htm](#)) to work with your child's school to start composting.

**A Family Adventure.** Take a hike to look for signs of decomposition (Alternate Activity 2) or try log dissection (Alternate Activity 3). Be sure to bring magnifying glasses!

**Family Discovery.** Watch a [video from New Hampshire public television](#) (at [video.nhptv.org/video/1491195223](#)) (approximately 14 minutes) about decomposition. If family members find some of the visuals "gross," try to think of the images as "fascinating," instead!

**A Family Game.** Have your child show you the motions for the fun with the Decomposition Chorus, or make up your own. Or, use ideas from the eHow website to [create a family board game about decomposition](#) (at [www.ehow.com/list\\_6597236\\_composting-games-kids.html](#)).

**A Family Ritual.** Perhaps your family already practices the ritual of chalice-lighting before dinner. Bring this kind of reverence and intentionality to composting. You might make a compost collection pail for your kitchen, and at the end of the day, make a trip to your compost bin to "feed" it, recognizing your part in the interdependent web of life.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: A VISIT TO THE COMPOST BIN (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Material for the compost bin such as coffee grounds, apple cores, and banana peels

### Preparation for Activity

- Communicate with families ahead of time that the children will be outside for this activity.
- Invite the group in the congregation who created and/or maintains the compost bin to lead a tour of the project.
- Optional: Invite children to bring materials to compost.

### Description of Activity

If the congregation has a compost bin, have the children visit it. Ask the adults who maintain the compost bin to tell the children how and why the bin was started, how it is "fed" (e.g., coffee grounds from social hour, fruit peels from snacks in religious education, or compostable waste from congregational meals). If the children have

brought compost material from home, invite them to place it in the bin. Show how to care for the material (e.g., turning the pile). If possible, show the fully composted material that can be used in a garden and allow children to hold some in their hands.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: DECOMPOSERS HIKE (25 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Magnifying glasses or handheld dental mirrors

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Inform families of your plan to bring the children outdoors. Arrange all necessary details, such as transportation, permission slips, sunscreen, insect repellent, and appropriate clothing.
- Select an appropriate location for your nature walk in consultation with the religious educator. Ideally, visit a wood, field, stream, or pond that is likely to have some fallen logs.
- Make sure you can recognize poison ivy. Learn about any venomous or otherwise dangerous creatures in your local habitat and how to avoid them.
- Determine whether anyone is allergic to bee stings, pollen, or other outdoor allergens and plan accordingly.

### **Description of Activity**

Take a walk outside.

Say, in these words or your own:

Today as we walk, we will be nature detectives, looking for evidence or clues of decomposition. Watch for decomposers, which are animals and other living things that help break down dead plant or animal matter into nutrients that create new healthy soil.

Distribute magnifying glasses when children wish to look at tiny creatures or closely examine a leaf, bark, or other feature of nature.

Look for fungi (mushrooms or shelf fungus are easiest to spot), beetles, millipedes, slugs, centipedes, sow bugs, ants, bacteria, maggots, and worms. If you find a log on the ground, see what's underneath. Note: Be sure to roll a log toward you and have everyone stand back a bit so you can control it without rolling over anyone's toes. Under logs, look for centipedes, beetles, salamanders, and other surprises. Carefully return the log back to its original location to avoid crushing any animals or plants.

Ask the children why they think decomposers are so important in the cycle of life.

After your walk, process with questions such as:

- I wonder what you enjoyed the most about our walk.
- I wonder if there was anything on our walk that made you say, "Wow!"

### **Including All Participants**

Determine whether there are any relevant allergies within your group, such as bee stings or pollen, and plan accordingly.

If you have a child who uses a wheelchair or has limited mobility, select a location that is accessible, with paved paths.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: LOG DISSECTION (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- A partly decomposed log, approximately 1 to 1.5 feet long and at least 8 inches in diameter
- A can opener, a bottle opener, or a knife large enough to open the log (for adult use)
- Magnifying glasses
- Optional: Newspaper or a tarp

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Select a location, preferably outdoors, where everyone can see the log. If indoors, place the log on the newspaper or tarp.
- Optional: Familiarize yourself with the creatures and plants you are likely to find on and inside the log. The Smithsonian National Zoological Park offers a useful extension activity online, "[Is There Life in a Decomposing Log?](http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Education/ClassroomScience/DecomposingLogs/Teacher/extensions.cfm)" (at [nationalzoo.si.edu/Education/ClassroomScience/DecomposingLogs/Teacher/extensions.cfm](http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Education/ClassroomScience/DecomposingLogs/Teacher/extensions.cfm)), which suggests a variety of books and websites, and includes a link to a "virtual rotting log."

### **Description of Activity**

This activity is best done outside, but you can keep the log on newspaper or a plastic tarp and do the activity inside.

Observe the outside of the log with the children. Look for moss, bracket fungus, lichen, and other living things.

Ask:

- Do you see any insects crawling around?
- What are they doing?
- Are there white patches or streaks? (That may be mold.)

Now ask the children what they think the inside of the log might look like. Use a can opener, bottle opener, or a knife to open up the rotting log. Observe what you find.

Have the children feel the bark gently as well as the inside of the log (do this carefully making sure there are no biting insects such as centipedes). Notice places where the wood is spongy and soft, notice others where it is crumbly. Sniff the rotting log. Ask:

- How does it smell? Moist? Earthy?
- Does it smell like something rotten or more like good garden soil?

See what kinds of critters you find inside. Explain that bacteria and fungus are the main decomposers, but insects such as beetles, maggots, and ants help break up the bark and wood and allow more air (oxygen) in.

Hand out magnifying glasses and allow the children to get a closer look at the hidden life inside the decaying wood.

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 7: STORY: AND IT IS GOOD

By Janeen Grohsmeyer, in *A Lamp in Every Corner* (Boston: Skinner House, 2004).

On a day not so very long ago, in a place not so very far away, a grass seed lay waiting. All through the cold, dark days of winter the seed waited, covered by a blanket of earth. In the spring, when the air was warmed by the sun and the land was watered by the rain, the seed began to grow. It grew roots deep into the earth. It grew a delicate pale green shoot up into the air. As the days went by, the shoot grew into a firm stalk, which waved in the hot summer breeze. It grew bright green leaves that opened to the sunshine, and then grew darker green as more days went by.

It grew and grew and grew, until the seed was a tall stem of grass and was ready to make seeds of its own. In the fall, when the nights turned cool and the leaves on the trees flamed red and orange and gold, the grass plant knew it would soon be dying, and so it set free its seeds. They traveled on the wind, above field and stream and hill. Some of them slowly settled to the ground in a meadow, where they lay waiting, covered by a blanket of earth. And it was good.

Now in that place not so very far away, a small field mouse was looking for food. Winter was coming, and the mouse was hungry. He went here and he went there, sniffing his way through the meadow, ears perked, eyes open, whiskers quivering, careful and cautious always, for there are many creatures that will eat a mouse. And as he sniffed and nibbled and then sniffed some more, he found a few of those grass seeds that lay covered by the blanket of earth. So he dug them up—*scratch scratch!*—and he ate them. And it was good.

Now in that place not so very far away, a snake was hunting. Winter was coming, and she was hungry. She went here and she went there, gliding through the faded fallen leaves from the trees, and tasting the air with flickerings of her forked tongue. She tasted the scent of mouse, and followed the scent to the meadow. After a while, she found him. So she caught him—*quick, snap!*—in her jaws, and she ate him. And it was good.

Now in the sky, high above that place not so very far away, a hawk was searching. Winter was coming, and

the hawk was hungry. He went here and he went there, soaring on the wind with outstretched wings, looking down to the earth far below. And at the edge of the meadow, he saw the snake gliding through the faded fallen leaves. So he folded his wings and he plummeted, straight down to the ground, and he caught that snake—*snatch, catch!*—in his fiercely curved claws, and he ate her. And it was good.

The days went by in that place not so very far away. The sun no longer warmed the air. Instead of rain, snow fell. The last of the leaves fell from the trees. The grass froze, and died. Winter had come.

The hawk soared on outstretched wings, lifted high by the winter winds, hunting. But he was an old hawk. His wings did not beat so strongly as they used to. His eyes did not see so clearly. His hunts did not go well. One day, he plummeted to earth for the last time, and he died. And it was good.

The body of the hawk lay on the ground all winter long, covered by snow. When spring came, the sun warmed the air, and the rain watered the land. Flies buzzed in the air. Ants scurried over the ground. Spring was here, and they were hungry. The ants and the flies found the body of the hawk. The flies laid their eggs in it, and the eggs hatched into maggots. The days went by, and the body of the hawk slowly disappeared, the flesh and feathers eaten by ants and maggots, the bones chewed on by small animals, and whatever was left provided food for bacteria and mold. In just a few weeks, the body of the hawk had completely melted back into the earth. And it was good.

Now in the earth where the hawk had melted, a seed lay waiting. As spring turned into summer, and as the sun warmed the air and the rain watered the land, the seed began to grow. It shot a pale shoot up into the air. It pushed roots deep into the earth, which was made up of the body of the hawk, who had eaten the snake, who had eaten the mouse, who had eaten the seeds. And it was good.

So remember, in that place not so very far away, and in all the places all around, there is sun and there is rain. There are seeds and mice and snakes and hawks. There are ants and maggots and bacteria and mold. There are crocodiles and humans and plankton and daffodils and mushrooms. They all eat from each other. They all live, and they all die. And it is all good.

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 7:**

### **HANDOUT 1: CARING FOR YOUR EARTHWORM WONDERLAND**

Adapted from *EcoArt!* by Laurie Carlson.

Caring for your Earthworm Wonderland at home:

- Keep the soil lightly moist, but not wet. Do not let it dry out.
- To feed the worms, sprinkle crushed dry dog food, shredded carrot bits, coffee grounds, or cornmeal over the soil.
- When you are finished studying your worms, return them to a garden, a yard, or a park where, they can continue doing their good work for the earth!

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 7:**

### **HANDOUT 2: DECOMPOSITION CHORUS LYRICS**

Is there waste? Well I don't know.

One thing dies to let another grow.

This circle we see most every day.

The name we call it, is decay.

Well come on all you people, gather 'round.

Breakdown and listen... to decomposition.

Group 1: Muncha, muncha, muncha. Muncha, muncha, muncha...

Group 2: Decomposition, decomposition, decomposition...

Group 3: I get down, I break down...

There are many kinds of bugs;

Worms and snails and slimy slugs.

They are useful for me and you;

They help make the soil... renew.

Well come on all you people, gather 'round.

Breakdown and listen... to decomposition.

Group 1: Muncha, muncha, muncha. Muncha, muncha, muncha...

Group 2: Decomposition, decomposition, decomposition...

Group 3: I get down, I break down...

Decomposition is a useful game,

A tree drops its leaves.

But they don't stay the same.

A bug chews them up and spits them back out;

Making the soil for a new tree to sprout.

Well come on all you people, gather 'round.

Breakdown and listen... to decomposition.

Group 1: Muncha, muncha, muncha. Muncha, muncha, muncha...

Group 2: Decomposition, decomposition, decomposition...

Group 3: I get down, I break down...



**WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 7:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: MURAL IMAGE — WORM BIN**

"Worm Farm" from [iStockphoto](https://www.iStockphoto.com).



## FIND OUT MORE

Watch the decomposition process in a 14-minute [video from New Hampshire public television](http://video.nhptv.org/video/1491195223) (at [video.nhptv.org/video/1491195223](http://video.nhptv.org/video/1491195223)).

Try a Google search for images of various decomposers.

Learn how Unitarian Universalists are involved in taking care of the earth with these two organizations:

[Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/))

[The Green Sanctuary Program](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml))

# SESSION 8: LIFE-GIVING PLANTS

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*All through the long winter, I dream of my garden. On the first day of spring, I dig my fingers deep into the soft earth. I can feel its energy, and my spirits soar. — Helen Hayes, American actress*

This session introduces the abundance and diversity of plants through the central story "Noah's Wife: The Story of Naamah." Kinesthetic learners will enjoy embodying the life cycle of a seed. The children learn "The Garden Song" and plant seedlings to take home. The Faith in Action activity involves creating or maintaining a garden, either on-site at your congregation or in partnership with a local community garden. Alternate Activity 2, Planting for Wildlife, invites children to make a lasting contribution to the congregation's landscaping by planting perennials; advance planning required.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the concepts of abundance and diversity in the plant world
- Teach children how to plant seedlings and care for them
- Connect plant life's abundance and diversity with creative expression, through a role play and learning "The Garden Song"
- Empower participants as leaders in the group
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Respond to a story, inspired by the biblical story of Noah's Ark, which illustrates the abundance and diversity of plant life
- Learn how to plant seedlings
- Understand a garden as a home for plant abundance and diversity by learning "The Garden Song" and (Faith in Action) engaging with a shared, harvestable garden at the congregation or in the local community

- Connect physically with the experience of a seed growing into a flower, through an embodiment exercise.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — Noah's Wife: The Story of Naamah	10
Activity 3: Growing a Plant	10
Activity 4: Starting Seedlings	15
Activity 5: The Garden Song	10
Faith in Action: Congregational or Community Garden	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Watering Can	15
Alternate Activity 2: Planting for Wildlife	30
Alternate Activity 3: Super Scents	15

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

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

- Think of a garden that has inspired you. What spiritual sustenance do you derive from it?
- What plants would you include in your dream garden?
- How do you experience the abundance and diversity of plants in your life?

Allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table with a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

—adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we will talk about plants. There are so many different kinds of plants! When we have a lot of something, that's called abundance. And when there are many different kinds of something in nature, that's called bio-diversity. Both abundance and diversity are very important to keep the interdependent web of life strong and healthy.

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a wide span in reading ability. Point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — NOAH'S WIFE: THE STORY OF NAAMAH (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Noah's Wife: The Story of Naamah](#) (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as an apple, a zucchini, some herbs, a dandelion, a milkweed pod, or a Noah's ark toy or picture
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props. Note: "Naamah" is pronounced "NAY-ma."
- Read the story questions. Choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick.

When the sound has completely disappeared, ask children if any are familiar with the story of Noah's ark. Provide context as needed. Then read or tell the story, "Noah's Wife: The Story of Naamah."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion with questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- What do you think about having so many different plants on earth?
- What are some of the ways you heard in the story, or ways you already knew, that plants help humans or other animals?
- How can we as Unitarian Universalist care for and protect the abundance and diversity of plants on earth?

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 3: GROWING A PLANT (10 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Read through the activity and practice your pacing.

- Recruit an adult helper to model the motions. Give this person a copy of this activity in advance.
- Designate a large space, preferably outdoors, where children can position themselves arms' width apart.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle and tell them they are going to become plants. In these words or your own, say:

How do plants start out?

Wait for responses. Affirm:

Yes, plants start as seeds... So, let's become seeds now. Crouch down and curl up like a tiny seed in the ground.

Continue, and have the adult helper model the children's movements as you describe them:

As you begin your journey as a seed, you'll need water to grow. I'll sprinkle you with some water. [Use your hands or fingers to sprinkle water or pretend to use a watering can.]

Now that you have the water you need, take one arm and extend it to the ground. This is your root, which continues to grow strong down into the soil to absorb water and nutrients—your food. Grow your root into your feet to steady your plant in the soil. Your feet are now a sturdy root.

With a big, hardy root, the stem begins to grow up out of the soil. Start slowly standing upright. Your body is the stem which holds the plant upright, just like your skeleton holds your human body upright.

Your stem grows taller and stronger, seeking sunlight. Once your stem is sturdy, leaves start to grow out of the stem. So, unfurl your arms to be leaves. The leaves absorb sunlight and convert it into food for a plant, so hold your leaves out for some sun.

The plant starts to grow a beautiful flower. Your face represents the flower so turn it up to the sky. The flower is looking for a bee to visit it. Here's a bee coming to visit each flower. [Buzz around to visit each "flower."]

After a bee visits your flower, the flower wilts, and a yummy fruit is left behind. The fruit is full of seeds for more plants. Hang your head down to represent a fruit heavy with seeds.

Now a hungry animal comes and takes the fruit and the seeds. It eats the fruit and drops the seeds in a new location. Crouch down into a ball

to become a seed once again, sleeping in the soil, waiting to start the cycle all over again.

Process the activity with questions such as:

- How did it feel to be a seed? To grow into a flower?
- How many different kinds of flowers can you think of? Do you have a favorite kind of flower? What do you like about it?

## ACTIVITY 4: STARTING SEEDLINGS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Paper cups or cardboard egg cartons
- Potting soil
- Packet(s) of fast-sprouting seeds, such as marigolds or zinnias
- Pitcher or watering can

### Preparation for Activity

- Fill pitcher with water.
- Set planting supplies on work table(s).

### Description of Activity

Gather the children around a table. Give each child a paper cup or a section of an egg carton. Pass the potting soil around and tell children to fill their cup with soil.

Using the seed packet directions, tell the children how deep in the dirt to plant their seeds and how much water to add. Help children plant and water the seeds.

Tell the children to put the planted seeds near a sunny window at home, and to keep them moist but not too wet. Tell them to check on their seed each day. Explain that in a few days, a seedling should sprout!

## ACTIVITY 5: THE GARDEN SONG (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, "[The Garden Song](#)" Lyrics (included in this document)
- Optional: A computer with Internet access

### Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 1 for all participants.
- Prepare to teach the song or recruit a song leader, preferably someone who can play the guitar accompaniment.



- Optional: Test computer equipment and cue this YouTube video of [Pete Seeger performing "The Garden Song"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u90qRE2F7CM) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=u90qRE2F7CM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u90qRE2F7CM))

### Description of Activity

Teach the chorus by singing a line and having the children sing it back. Then, the music leader can sing the verses and have the children join in on the chorus. If no music leader is available to sing the verses, you can show the video of Peter Seeger and lead the children to join in with the chorus.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 1, [Mural Image — Community Garden](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing Song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1, Mural Image — Community Garden, preferably in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the newsprint with lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

### Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we learned about the abundance and diversity of plants in our interdependent web of life. Unitarian Universalists believe all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like this web. Each time we meet we add something new to our World of Wonder mural. Today we add a picture of a community garden, to remind us of the importance of plants in our lives and in the web of life we all share.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: CONGREGATIONAL OR COMMUNITY GARDEN

### Materials for Activity

- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- Handout 1, "[The Garden Song](#)" Lyrics (included in this document)
- Optional: Unitarian Universalist Association [Ethical Eating Study Guide](#) (at [www.uua.org/environment/eating/121903.shtml](http://www.uua.org/environment/eating/121903.shtml))

### Preparation for Activity

- Consult with the religious educator and other appropriate congregational leaders and/or staff. Decide where and when you can create a congregational garden, how the group can help maintain an existing congregational garden.
- If a congregational garden is not feasible, find out how families and/or the wider congregation can become involved with a community garden in your area. Learn about UU congregations partnering with community gardens on the [Green Sanctuary blog](http://greensanctuary.blogs.uua.org/ethical-eating/hayward-community-gardens-starr-king-uu-church/) (at [greensanctuary.blogs.uua.org/ethical-eating/hayward-community-gardens-starr-king-uu-church/](http://greensanctuary.blogs.uua.org/ethical-eating/hayward-community-gardens-starr-king-uu-church/)) or on congregational websites ([search UUA.org](http://search.UUA.org) for community garden partnerships (at [www.google.com/search?q=UU+congregations+and+community+gardens&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a](http://www.google.com/search?q=UU+congregations+and+community+gardens&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a))). The [American Community Garden Association](http://AmericanCommunityGardenAssociation.org) (at [communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php](http://communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php)) also has many resources.
- Choose a date for a meeting to launch this project, in consultation with the religious educator and appropriate congregational leaders.
- Communicate the event to the World of Wonder families and, if you wish, the wider congregation. If the congregation participates in the [Green Sanctuary](#) (at [www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml)) program, invite members of that committee to participate.

- If the garden is off-site, make appropriate transportation arrangements including permissions.
- Recruit volunteers to photograph or video the project.
- Copy Handout 1 for all participants.

### Description of Activity

This activity engages children directly in planting and/or maintaining a garden.

If your congregation already has a garden, find a project that the World of Wonder children and their families can work on. Depending on the season, they might help prepare the garden for planting, plant seeds, weed growing plants, harvest, or prepare the garden for winter. If the congregation does not have a garden, and space is available, work with the appropriate congregational leaders to plan a garden and designate certain tasks or even a part of the garden for religious education groups. Involve the children as much as possible in decisions about the garden, such as what to plant and where to donate the garden's yield.

Delegates at the General Assembly in Charlotte, NC, approved [Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice](http://www.uua.org/statements/statements/185320.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/statements/statements/185320.shtml](http://www.uua.org/statements/statements/185320.shtml)) as a 2011 Statement of Conscience. Resources include the [Ethical Eating Study Guide](http://www.uua.org/environment/eating/121903.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/environment/eating/121903.shtml](http://www.uua.org/environment/eating/121903.shtml)) and the [Ethical Eating blog](http://ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses) (at [ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses](http://ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses)). Here are some ideas from the blog:

[Congregational garden](http://ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses) (at [ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses](http://ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses)). Create a community garden on the congregation's property or in the community. Research area community gardens and invite a representative to educate your group about getting started. Involve children and youth. One mostly White congregation in Oregon established a community garden in cooperation with Latino-Latina neighbors, including individual plots and a group plot for corn raised with traditional indigenous methods; the project included potlucks with concomitant ESL classes. A Massachusetts congregation maintains an organic community garden at a local human services center, donating most of its harvest to local food assistance programs; the garden hosts the town's Earth Day festival, and provides food for an annual October dinner raising funds for nearby food banks.

At the close of the initial meeting, ask the World of Wonder children to lead participants in the song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands" or "The Garden Song."

Share the photos or video with the children in a subsequent session.

### Including All Participants

Ensure that shared work areas are accessible to all.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately after the session, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? What information or help do we need?
- How was the timing? How can sessions work better within our time frame?
- Is our program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we do differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

All through the long winter, I dream of my garden. On the first day of spring, I dig my fingers deep into the soft earth. I can feel its energy, and my spirits soar. — Helen Hayes, American actress

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we explored the amazing abundance and diversity of plants. We heard a version of the story *Noah's Wife: The Story of Naamah* and role-played growing from a seed to a flower. We sang "The Garden Song" and planted seedlings. Help your child remember to water the seedling and share the wonder when the sprouts first appear.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** ways your family can engage with the UUA 2011 Statement of Conscience on Ethical Eating. In addition to congregational or community garden partnerships, there are many ideas and resources in the [Ethical Eating Study Guide](http://www.uua.org/environment/eating/121903.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/environment/eating/121903.shtml](http://www.uua.org/environment/eating/121903.shtml)) and the [Ethical Eating blog](http://ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses) (at [ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses](http://ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses)).



**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER.** Plant a garden at home, at your child's school, at your congregation, or in a community garden. Spend time in the garden during every season and live in harmony with the rhythms of life.

**A Family Adventure.** Tour a local community garden, or plan a trip to a CSA (community supported agriculture) farmer in your area. Learn more at the [Local Harvest website](http://www.localharvest.org/csa/) (at [www.localharvest.org/csa/](http://www.localharvest.org/csa/)).

**Family Discovery.** Explore the wonderful world of herbs by doing Alternate Activity 3, Super Scents at home. Have each family member choose a favorite herb, then find recipes for dishes you can make together. Find ideas in this article: "[Kids and Herbs — Fun Cooking for Your Child](http://cookinkids.com/Cooking_Kids_Articles/kidsherbs/)" (at [cookinkids.com/Cooking\\_Kids\\_Articles/kidsherbs/](http://cookinkids.com/Cooking_Kids_Articles/kidsherbs/)).

**A Family Game.** Play a garden-related game such as the [Gathering a Garden eco-friendly board game](http://www.amazon.com/Gathering-A-Garden-Board-Game/dp/B003450AQS) (at [www.amazon.com/Gathering-A-Garden-Board-Game/dp/B003450AQS](http://www.amazon.com/Gathering-A-Garden-Board-Game/dp/B003450AQS)). Better yet, create your own family garden game.

**A Family Ritual.** Each January, seed catalogs arrive. Obtain a seed catalog and set aside time with your family to imagine the garden you will plant in the spring. If you have a garden now, think back to the highs and lows of the previous year's garden. Choose new plantings to try this year.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WATERING CAN (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Clean, one-gallon, plastic milk jugs, with caps—one for each participant
- Nails
- Markers (preferably waterproof) and stickers

### Preparation for Activity

- Collect enough plastic milk jugs for each participant plus a few extra for newcomers. Be sure jugs have been rinsed thoroughly.

### Description of Activity

This activity recycles plastic milk jugs to make watering cans.

Tell the children they are going to make their own watering cans. Distribute jugs, markers, and stickers.

Invite children to decorate their watering cans. Have an adult punch holes near the top of each jug on the side opposite to the handle, and show children how to hold the can to water plants.

Explain:

To use your watering can, fill the jug with water by removing the cap and pouring in water from a faucet or hose. Replace the cap, then give some flowers a nice, long drink.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: PLANTING FOR WILDLIFE (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Selected perennials
- Mulch
- Garden gloves
- Garden tools such as trowels and shovels in assorted sizes

### Preparation for Activity

- Consult with the religious educator and the congregations grounds or facilities committee and/or staff on where, when, and how much you can plant.
- [Identify possible native plants](http://www.wildflower.org/) (at [www.wildflower.org/](http://www.wildflower.org/)) for your state that will help attract birds, butterflies, or other desirable wildlife to your congregation's landscape. Determine the exposure, soil, and other conditions of the site you will plant. Then, purchase (or have donated) the native plants that will fit your landscape best.
- Ask parents to have children bring appropriate outdoor clothes, and garden gloves if they have any at home. Gather extra gloves.
- Recruit volunteers to photograph or videotape the work session as well as to help with planting.

### Description of Activity

This activity requires some advance preparation, but can be very rewarding for a congregation. Flowering perennials, which will come up each year, are easy to plant. Small shrubs are also easy to plant and will last a long time.

On planting day, have the children take turns digging holes, putting in plants, watering, and mulching. Engage adult volunteers to help as needed. Take pictures or videotape of the planting project and plan to share these with the children in a subsequent session.

Let the children and their families know what time of year the plants start blooming or when prime wildlife season is for the plants. Encourage families to make a special effort to visit and observe the plantings at those times.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: SUPER SCENTS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Three to five aromatic herbs such as lavender, lemon balm, mint, oregano, dill, and rosemary—cuttings or potted

### Preparation for Activity

- Obtain aromatic herbs from a garden, grocery store, farmer's market or local nursery
- Research the uses of and interesting facts about the selected herbs on a site such as [HerbNet](http://www.herbnet.com/) (at [www.herbnet.com/](http://www.herbnet.com/)) or [Gardens Ablaze](http://www.gardensablaze.com/Herbs.htm) (at [www.gardensablaze.com/Herbs.htm](http://www.gardensablaze.com/Herbs.htm)).

### Description of Activity

Place the herbs on a table. Invite the children to take turns crushing a small leaf or flower part from the herbs or gently brushing their fingertips across the plant tops, and then smelling their fingers. Or, you might gather the children in a circle and pass the herbs around.

Ask the children to describe the scents they are smelling. Ask if any of these aromas are familiar. Where have children smelled them before? Share the names of the herbs. Ask children what they think an herb might be used for, then tell them what you know or have found out about that herb.

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 8: STORY: NOAH'S WIFE, THE STORY OF NAAMAH**

*Noah's Wife: The Story of Naamah* (C) Text 1996 Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. Permission granted by Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, VT, [www.jewishlights.com](http://www.jewishlights.com).

*"Naamah" is pronounced "NAY-ma."*

In the time when the world was still young, plants and animals and people filled all creation. But the people were not always kind to one another.

In earth's garden, there lived a man named Noah and a woman named Naamah. God said to Noah and Naamah, "There is too much hate on earth and in people's hearts. But your hearts are good, and you can help me begin again."

God said to Noah, "Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Do this quickly, for I am about to bring a great flood to destroy all that is under the sky. Bring two of every animal that lives on this earth, birds and cattle and creeping things of every kind. Gather enough food for you and for them and store it in the ark."

Then God called out to Naamah, "Walk across the land and gather the seeds of all the flowers and all the trees. Take two of every kind of living plant and bring each one onto the ark. They shall not be for food, but they shall be your garden, to tend and to keep. Work quickly. The rains begin tomorrow." Naamah tied an apron of many pockets around her waist and walked through all of the earth's fields and gardens. She journeyed into the forest and carefully gathered the spores from the moss that made a carpet at her feet. She placed them in the cool deep pockets of her apron, away from the light of the sun.

She came upon the giant redwoods. They carried their cones too high for her hands to reach. "God," called Naamah, "blow me a wind so that the redwoods will let go of their seeds and I may gather them." Just then a fierce howling sound blew through the forest and soon at Naamah's feet were the cones of the redwoods.

Naamah picked acorns from the oak trees, and nuts from the pecan and pistachio. The winged seeds of the maples snapped under the gentle pull of her hands. She carefully lifted the seedlings of the cedar and cypress, the persimmon and plum. She found every tree, from acacia to ziziphus.

Naamah walked into the fields right past the dandelions, pretending not to notice their feathery yellow heads sprouting over the grass. "Naamah," called God, "gather the seeds of every living plant!" And Naamah knew that God meant the dandelions too. Reluctantly, she placed their seeds in her pockets with all the others. Because

Naamah had ignored them, God made certain that dandelions would cover the earth.

Naamah gathered the seeds of the sunflowers and buttercups, the orchids and jasmine. The fields blossomed with dahlias and daffodils, lilies and lavender. She picked two of every kind and planted them in red clay pots to carry onto the ark. She collected all the flowers, from the amaryllis to the zinnia.

Tomatoes burst with seed and avocado pits rested in their green fruit. The fields were ripe with potatoes and pomegranates, oranges and okra, lima beans and lemons. Naamah carried large straw baskets to hold all the varieties of fruits and vegetables, everything from apples to zucchini.

When Naamah had collected the seeds and seedlings of every living plant upon the earth, she arranged every plant and seed, each in its special place on the ark. Then she made a sign that read:

NAAMAH'S GARDEN—these plants are not for food.

Then the sun disappeared, lightning flashed and thunder boomed. Dark clouds filled the sky and rain poured from the heavens until the waters covered all the lime green aspens and the emerald green pines.

Noah and Naamah looked out over the waters and were sad for all that had been destroyed. For forty days and forty nights the skies never brightened, and the rains never ceased.

On the ark, Noah and Naamah cared for the lions and the leopards, the porcupines and parrots, the opossums and orangutans. Some of the animals liked to eat in the day, and others wanted to eat at night. Just as the squirrels closed their eyes for the evening, the owls hooted for food.

There were as many sounds as there were animals on the ark. The coyotes howled, the snakes hissed and the peacocks shrieked; the noise never stopped. Water was everywhere, but there was none for a bath. The smell of the animals filled the ark.

At these times Noah and Naamah would breathe the sweet aroma of the flowers and sit in the quiet of the plants that they called Naamah's garden. They prayed for the rains to stop.

After forty days and forty nights, a rushing wind rolled over the waters and the rains ceased. The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. When Naamah and Noah looked out the window atop the ark, they saw the black sky soften into shades of blue.

Finally the ground was dry and firm. Two by two, Noah led the animals from the ark. Some pranced, some flew, some slithered, and in this way they spread out over the earth.

Naamah carefully placed all the seeds and seedlings in the deep pockets of her apron. As soon as she set foot on the new land, Naamah knelt down, put her hands into the soft moist earth, and made small cradles in which to plant. She placed downy tufts of milkweed seeds in her palms and held them up to the sky to let the wind carry them in all directions.

Naamah took off her sandals and let her feet sink into the soft soil. She sighed with delight at the touch of the land. Morning gave way to afternoon, and Naamah worked without rest. As she patted the earth around a small raspberry bush, a dark red berry fell generously into her hand. The taste of ripened raspberry refreshed her.

God saw all that Naamah had planted and God said, "Because of your great love for the earth, I will make you guardian of all living plants." For a single moment, God gave Naamah's eyes the vision to see into the future and from one end of the earth to the other. She saw how the seeds were carried great distances, and how they landed softly on the soft ground. As God had promised, dandelions were everywhere.

Naamah delighted in how the trees grew tall and spread umbrellas of shade over the earth. Flowers sprinkled yellow, peach and lilac over the fields. To this day whenever someone digs in the earth and plants a seed, Naamah's garden continues to grow.

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 8:**

### **HANDOUT 1: THE GARDEN SONG LYRICS**

[Words and music by David Mallett](#) and published by Cherry Lane Music Publishing Co., Inc.; used by permission of David Mallett.

#### **CHORUS:**

Inch by inch, row by row  
Gonna make this garden grow  
Gonna mulch it deep and low  
Gonna make it fertile ground.  
Inch by inch, row by row  
Please bless these seeds I sow  
Please keep them safe below  
'Till the rain comes tumbling down.  
Pullin' weeds and pickin' stones  
We are made of dreams and bones  
Need a place to call my own  
'Cause the time is close at hand.  
Grain for grain, sun and rain  
Find my way in nature's chain  
Till my body and my brain  
Tell the music of the land.

#### **CHORUS**

Plant your rows straight and long  
Season with a prayer and song  
Mother Earth will make you strong  
If you give her loving care.  
Old crow watching from a tree  
He's got his hungry eye on me  
In my garden I'm as free  
As that feathered thief up there.

#### **CHORUS**

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 8: LEADER RESOURCE 1: MURAL IMAGE — COMMUNITY GARDEN

"Children holding community garden sign" from [iStockphoto](#).



## FIND OUT MORE

Learn about UU congregations partnering with community gardens on the [Green Sanctuary blog](http://greensanctuary.blogs.uua.org/ethical-eating/hayward-community-gardens-starr-king-uu-church/) (at [greensanctuary.blogs.uua.org/ethical-eating/hayward-community-gardens-starr-king-uu-church/](http://greensanctuary.blogs.uua.org/ethical-eating/hayward-community-gardens-starr-king-uu-church/)) or on congregational websites ([search UUA.org for community garden partnerships](http://search.uua.org/for-community-garden-partnerships) (at [www.google.com/search?q=UU+congregations+and+community+gardens&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a](http://www.google.com/search?q=UU+congregations+and+community+gardens&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a))). The [American Community Garden Association](http://communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php) (at [communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php](http://communitygarden.org/learn/starting-a-community-garden.php)) also has many resources.

Delegates at the 2011 General Assembly in Charlotte, North Carolina, approved [Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice](http://www.uua.org/statements/statements/185320.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/statements/statements/185320.shtml](http://www.uua.org/statements/statements/185320.shtml)) as a UUA Statement of Conscience. Resources include the [Ethical Eating Study Guide](http://www.uua.org/environment/eating/121903.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/environment/eating/121903.shtml](http://www.uua.org/environment/eating/121903.shtml)) and the [Ethical Eating blog](http://ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses) (at [ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses](http://ethicaleating.uua.org/main-courses)).

Learn how Unitarian Universalists are involved in taking care of the earth with these two organizations:

[Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuistryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuistryforearth.org/](http://www.uuistryforearth.org/))

[The Green Sanctuary Program](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml))



# SESSION 9: CREATIVITY IN NATURE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Let the rain kiss you. Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops. Let the rain sing you a lullaby. — Langston Hughes, 20th-century African American poet*

This session looks at creativity in the web of life, exploring the idea that humans are not the only creatures that exhibit an urge to create. The central story, "The Most Beautiful Bower in the World," introduces the elaborate structures that male bower birds make to impress females. Female bower birds select mates based on the creativity shown in the bowers the males make. Children's creativity is fostered in a recycled art activity that encourages self-expression and imagination. For a hands-on experience of nature, see Alternate Activity 1, Birding Expedition.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Present creativity as a positive attribute that benefits the web of life
- Provide opportunities for participants to experience and honor creativity
- Draw on science as one of the Sources of Unitarian Universalism
- Empower participants as leaders in the group
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Discuss creativity in the non-human world through a story about bower birds
- Learn a definition of the word "creativity"
- Use imagination and creativity to make their own "nests"
- Appreciate the creativity expressed by others in the group
- Perform leadership roles.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — The Most Beautiful Bower in the World	10
Activity 3: Creative Nests	25
Activity 4: Creativity in Nature	10
Faith in Action: Multigenerational Recycled Art	120
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: Birding Expedition	30
Alternate Activity 3: Creative "Ish" Exploration	25

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for several minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, take a few moments to reflect on your own creativity:

- What messages did you receive about imagination and creativity as you were growing up? Was imagination valued or dismissed?
- How do you feel about your creativity today?
- Are there any types of creative expression that you avoid? Is there an area in which your creativity is blocked?
- How do you express creativity in your life? Areas where you express creativity might include movement and dance, writing, music, art, problem solving, generating ideas, woodworking, sewing, or gardening.

As you prepare to lead the group, honor the creativity that exists in each participant and allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

— adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we will talk about creativity. What do you think the word "creativity" means? Have you ever been "creative?"

Take responses, then say:

Creativity means using your imagination to make something new and different. We will meet an amazing bird called a bowerbird that will show us just some of the creativity found in nature and in our interdependent web.

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a very wide span in terms of reading ability. Point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect children to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BOWER IN THE WORLD (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[The Most Beautiful Bower in the World](#) (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as a copy of Leader Resource 1, [Mural Image — Bowerbird](#) (included in this document) , a bird's nest, blue items such as blue feathers, blue ribbon, a blue stone, or even blue plastic bottle tops
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions. Choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, read or tell the story, "The Most Beautiful Bower in the World."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion using questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- I wonder what color you would choose if you were a bowerbird?
- I wonder how being creative could help an animal survive.
- I wonder if you can think of any other examples of things that animals create. .
- I wonder how creativity is important in the interdependent web of all existence.

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 3: CREATIVE NESTS (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Cardboard boxes large enough for making a child-sized "nest"
- Recycled items and art supplies for decorating nests, such as glitter glue, ribbons, markers, wallpaper scraps, construction paper, beads and

string, pipe cleaners, stick-on gems, and scissors (including left-handed scissors), glue, tape, and glue sticks

- Natural items for decoration, such as stones, shells, colorful leaves, and small sticks
- Optional: Blankets or towels from home

### Preparation for Activity

- Find a large, open area where children can make "nests," outdoors if possible. If space and/or cardboard boxes present a problem, consider using Alternate Activity 3, Creative "Ish" Exploration, instead.

### Description of Activity

Children experience their own creativity by making nests using a variety of supplies. As they note the differences among the nests their peers make, they see how creativity can be expressed in many ways.

Gather the children in a large, open space and show them the materials you have gathered for nest making. Explain that they will create their own nests using their imaginations and the available materials (and a blanket or towel from home, if they have brought one). Tell them they may use any of the materials they want in any way they want and may take their nest home with them.

Allow the children to create the nests undisturbed for approximately 15 minutes. Then, gather in a group. Have each child in turn share the "nest" they have created. With each nest, invite everyone in the group to notice features that are interesting, unique, or especially creative. Instruct participants to only share positive comments.

When you are done, gather in a circle and process the activity with questions such as:

- I wonder how you felt when you were creating your nests.
- I wonder what you noticed about all of the different nests we made.
- I wonder how bowerbirds feel when they are creating their nests.
- I wonder how creativity is important in the web of life.
- I wonder if there is anything about creativity that gives you a feeling of awe.

## ACTIVITY 4: CREATIVITY IN NATURE VIDEOS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Computer with Internet access and a large monitor or a digital projector and screen

### Preparation for Activity

- Preview these videos of bowerbirds and decide which you will watch: [Satin Bowerbird courtship](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_BurGW2rPU) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=v\\_BurGW2rPU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_BurGW2rPU)) (2:46), [Satin Bowerbird](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJ32_ijdmLo) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJ32\\_ijdmLo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJ32_ijdmLo)) (1:42), [Vogelkopf bowerbird](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPbWJPsBPdA) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPbWJPsBPdA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPbWJPsBPdA)) (4:13), and [Vogelkopf Bowerbird](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ktip0DqIT4k&feature=related) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ktip0DqIT4k&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ktip0DqIT4k&feature=related)) (3:18).
- You may want to include examples of other animals expressing creativity. This video shows [elephants that have been trained to paint](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7Vuv4ScRuU) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7Vuv4ScRuU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7Vuv4ScRuU)) (3:42).
- Test computer and Internet access, and cue the videos to show the group.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes bowerbirds and their bowers concrete by showing the children what they look like.

Watch the footage you have selected.

When you are done, gather in a circle and process the activity with questions such as:

- I wonder how male bowerbirds select items for their bowers.
- I wonder how the female bowerbirds decide which bowers they like best.
- I wonder how the elephants learn to paint pictures? Where do they get their ideas?

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 1, [Mural Image — Bowerbird](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

## Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1, Mural Image — Bowerbird, preferably in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the newsprint with lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

## Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we learned about creativity, which is using our imaginations to create something new and different. Unitarian Universalists believe that that all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like the web on our mural. Each time we meet we add something new to our World of Wonder mural. Today we add a picture of a bowerbird, to remind us of the amazing creativity in our lives and in the web of life.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: MULTIGENERATIONAL RECYCLED ART WORKSHOP (120 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Recycled items and art supplies, such as paper towel tubes, magazines, fabric scraps, sea shells, paper and scissors, glue, tape, markers, and craft sticks
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- Optional: Food and beverages

### Preparation for Activity

- Determine with the religious educator where to host this workshop. You might hold it on-site at your congregation or in another space in your community. You will need work tables with

chairs and work surfaces accessible to people who use a wheelchair.

- Schedule a two-hour time—an hour for participants to create art and an hour to share and celebrate.
- Request congregants to bring recycled materials from their homes for this project. Supplement the items participants will bring with a variety of art supplies. You might include materials for wall hangings, sculptures, jewelry, or functional objects such as pencil holders.
- Invite all members of the congregation to participate. Request a pulpit announcement, preferably by the children in the World of Wonder group.
- Prepare the World of Wonder group to open the gathering by sharing what they have learned about creativity and bower birds.
- Set materials at work tables.
- Optional: Set up refreshment table(s).

### Description of Activity

The children lead a multigenerational group to explore creativity in a way that promotes recycling.

Open the gathering by having members of the World of Wonder group introduce the concept of creativity and explain how bower birds use creativity. Invite participants to use the materials in any way that they wish to create a work of art. Possibilities include collages, wall hangings, sculptures, and functional objects such as pencil holders. Say that the goal is to be as creative and imaginative as possible; there is no right or wrong way to do their work.

After about an hour, invite participants of all ages to briefly share their creation and celebrate the amazing expressions of creativity in the group.

Optional: Serve refreshments.

To close the gathering, have the World of Wonder children lead participants to sing "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately after the session, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? What information or help do we need?
- How was the timing? How can sessions work better within our time frame?
- Is our program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we do differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

Let the rain kiss you. Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops. Let the rain sing you a lullaby. — Langston Hughes, 20th-century African American poet

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we considered how creativity benefits the web of life. We learned that female bowerbirds select their mates based on creativity in building structures called bowers. The children created their own "nests" using a variety of materials and noticed how many different ways the nests could be created. We added an image of a bowerbird to our World of Wonder mural.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** different ways of being creative, for example in writing, with artwork, in movement or dance, with music, with problem-solving, with imaginative ideas. Name and appreciate different ways the members of your family express creativity. Identify ways these gifts of creativity benefit your family, your community, and the web of life.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...**

**A Family Adventure.** Go on a birding expedition, if possible in a local nature preserve. Look for nests and notice how they are constructed and the materials used. Try to identify the different songs and sounds that the local birds make. At home you can learn about identifying birdsong online at the [Nature Songs website](http://www.naturesongs.com/birds.html) (at [www.naturesongs.com/birds.html](http://www.naturesongs.com/birds.html)).

**Family Discovery.** Learn together about creativity and intelligence as it is expressed in nature. Read books such as *What Does the Crow Know? The Mysteries of Animal Intelligence*, by Margery Facklam. On YouTube, watch video of the [Satin Bowerbird \(1:42\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJ32_ijdmLo) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJ32\\_ijdmLo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJ32_ijdmLo)) or [the painting elephants of Thailand](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=painting+elephants+of+Thailand) (at [www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=painting+elephants+of+Thailand](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=painting+elephants+of+Thailand)).

[hants+of+Thailand&oq=painting+elephants+of+Thailand&aq=f&aqi=&aql=&gs\\_l=youtube-psuggest.3...7156.9130.0.9282.12.12.0.0.0.163.1447.1j11.12.0...0.0.\) of Thailand.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJ32_ijdmLo)

**A Family Game.** Read the picture books *The Dot* and *Ish*, by Peter Reynolds to reinforce a message that anyone can be an artist and one's creations toned not be "perfect." After reading the books, give each person a number of pieces of paper and put dots in the middle of each page. Have each person use their imagination to see what they can make from their dots. See how creative and "ish" you can all be!

**A Family Ritual.** Create a family altar or centering space together that can serve as a focal point for your spiritual life together. Decide together how to construct this space and what items you want to display there. Elicit everyone's answers to these questions:

- What is sacred to you?
- What items represent the divine (or what matters most to you in the world)?
- What objects inspire awe and wonder? Gratitude?
- Do you have pictures or items that connect you with ancestors, family members, and other loved ones which you would like to include?
- Are there items that remind you of the role of Unitarian Universalism in your life, such as a chalice or a copy of the Principles and Sources?
- Do you have objects that inspire you to be your best self? Items that inspire creativity?

Place a decorative cloth over a table or other piece of furniture and then work together to place your inspirational items on this special space.

You can use the altar when you want to set aside a special time as a family, for example, to celebrate a Sabbath, hold a gratitude circle, honor a rite of passage such as moving into adulthood, talk through a family conflict, or share a bedtime ritual. Simply gather around the centering place, light a candle or chalice, and perform your ritual.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

**Materials for Activity**

- Ball of yarn

**Preparation for Activity**

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.



- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.
2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.

Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: BIRDING EXPEDITION (30 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A guide to birds that live in the local ecosystem
- Lunch-sized paper bags, cloth bags, or small baggies for all participants
- Optional: Flashlights, magnifying glasses, or handheld dental mirrors

### Preparation for Activity

- Inform families of your plan to bring the children outdoors. Arrange all necessary details, such as transportation, permission slips, sunscreen, insect repellent, and appropriate clothing.
- Select an appropriate location for your nature walk in consultation with the religious educator. Ideally, visit a wood, field, stream, or pond that is likely to have some fallen logs.

- Make sure you can recognize poison ivy. Learn about any venomous or otherwise dangerous creatures in your local habitat and how to avoid them.
- Determine whether anyone is allergic to bee stings, pollen, or other outdoor allergens and plan accordingly.

### Description of Activity

Participants experience nature directly.

Go on a nature walk with bird watching as your goal. Explain to the children the importance of staying quiet. Pause on the walk to silently listen for birdsong. Look under bushes and in trees for bird nests. Remind the children that the nests are homes and instruct them not to disturb the bird nests in any way. Look for birds and try to identify them with your bird guide.

Invite participants to collect any interesting non-living items they find, such as acorns, stones, or leaves, in their paper bags.

After the walk, process the activity with questions such as:

- I wonder if you saw anything that was created by an animal, insect or bird.
- I wonder what you enjoyed the most about our walk?
- I wonder if there was anything on our walk that made you feel awe, like a big "Wow!"
- I wonder how we can be helpful partners for the birds we saw today?

### Including All Participants

Determine whether there are any relevant allergies within your group, such as bee stings or pollen, and plan accordingly.

If you have a child who uses a wheelchair or has limited mobility, select a location that is accessible, with paved paths.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: CREATIVE "ISH" EXPLORATION (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Recycled objects and art supplies, such as tape, paper towel tubes, wallpaper or fabric scraps, shells, construction paper, magazines, markers, scissors, glue, and craft sticks
- Optional, but recommended: A copy of the book, *Ish*, by Peter Reynolds. This simple picture book describes a boy's struggle to create "perfect"



pictures; he recovers his joy in drawing when his sister points out that his vase looks "vase-ish"

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Consider this activity as an alternative to Activity 3, Creative Nests, which shares the same goals but requires more space.
- Set materials at work tables.

### **Description of Activity**

Children experience their own creativity by making art projects from the provided supplies. The activity emphasizes the creative process over the finished result. As they note the differences in the artwork made by peers, children see how creativity can be expressed in many ways.

Gather the children at the work table(s). If you have chosen to do so, read the book, *Ish*, by Peter Reynolds. Show participants the supplies you have gathered. Invite them to use their creativity and imagination to create anything they want, using the provided materials. Explain that there is no "right" or "wrong" way to do their work.

Allow the children to create art projects undisturbed for about 20 minutes. Then, gather in a group and have each child in, turn, share their artwork, if they wish. With each piece of art, invite everyone in the group to notice things that are interesting, unique, or especially creative about it. Instruct participants to only share positive comments.

When you are done, gather in a circle. Process the activity with questions such as:

- I wonder how you decided what to create.
- I wonder how you felt when you were creating your art.
- I wonder what you noticed about all of the different art projects.
- I wonder how creativity helps people.
- I wonder how creativity is important in the web of life.
- I wonder if there is anything about creativity that seems sacred or gives you a feeling of awe.

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 9: STORY: THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BOWER IN THE WORLD**

By Janeen Grohsmeyer.

In the land of Australia, where koalas climb high in eucalyptus trees and kangaroos bound across grassy plains on great big feet, a baby bird pecked his way out of his shell.

His mother called him Kejaro, and she brought him good fruit to eat. Every day, for dessert, she brought him bugs. His feathers were brown and green, just like his mother's. Both Kejaro and his mother had pale blue eyes.

Every day, Kejaro ate fruit and bugs, to help him grow bigger. Every day, he flapped his wings hard, to help him grow stronger.

And every night, his mother told him stories about his father. "He was handsome, with satiny blue feathers," she told him. "He was graceful, with a beautiful dance. He was charming, with a lovely voice. And he built the most beautiful bower in the world."

"What's a bower?" asked Kejaro, for all he knew of the world was their nest, high in a tree and surrounded by green leaves, and the slivers of blue far above them that his mother said was "sky."

"A bower is a special nest, built upon the ground," his mother told him. "With his feet, your father smoothed the ground to make a dancing floor. With his beak, he placed each twig, just so, to make an archway. He chewed leaves and berries to make paint then dipped a piece of bark into it and painted the archway's walls. He flew far and wide to find the prettiest flowers and feathers and shells to decorate the bower with, and all of them were of the most beautiful blue."

"Like the sky?" Kejaro asked.

"Like the sky," his mother agreed. "When I came to the bower, your father danced and sang for me, and then I joined him on the dancing floor. Someday, Kejaro, you will build a bower for your lady love."

Then his mother covered him with her wing, for it was time to sleep. Kejaro closed his eyes, wondering what kind of bower he would build when he was grown.

When Kejaro was three weeks old, he flew for the very first time. Soon, he could swoop and soar and zoom up and zoom down. He went high enough to see the sky, and it was huge, not just little slivers. It stretched from one end of the world to the other, and all of it was of the most beautiful blue.

A few days later, he and his mother left their nest. They flew until they found a flock of other birds. All of them had brown and green feathers and pale blue eyes.

Kejaro spent his days playing with his new friends. They flew high in the sky, zipping and zooming and swooping and soaring. They ate fruit from trees and bushes. Sometimes, for dessert, they would hunt bugs. At night, they slept on the branches of trees. Around them, koalas climbed high in the eucalyptus trees and kangaroos bounded across the grassy plains on great big feet.

When Kejaro was five years old, he noticed that he had some new feathers that were a dark, satiny blue. The other boys had some new dark feathers, too. All the girls were still green and brown. Kejaro decided he didn't want to spend his days zipping and zooming and swooping and soaring.

He wanted to build.

Kejaro flew into the forest, searching for just the right spot. He found it, surrounded by four tall trees, with a little rivulet of water not far away. With his feet, he smoothed the ground to make a dancing floor. With his beak, he placed each twig, just so, to make an archway. He chewed leaves and berries to make paint then used a piece of bark to paint the archway's walls. He flew far and wide to find the prettiest flowers and feathers and shells to decorate his bower with, and all of them were of the most beautiful blue.

Every day, he noticed that more of his own feathers were turning satiny blue. Every day, he practiced dancing and singing, making the sounds of other creatures he heard. Every day, he smoothed the dancing floor and rearranged the flowers and feathers and shells.

Some days he went hunting for more decorations. Kejaro found snail shells and bright leaves and beetle wings, but he liked blue parrot feathers the best. He took a few from another bird's bower a few flights away. The next day when he came back from a trip, every single one of his blue parrot feathers were gone. So Kejaro went searching again.

In the spring, a lovely green and brown bird with pale blue eyes came to his bower. He danced and sang his best for her, but then she flew away.

Kejaro was sad, but he promised himself, "I'll do it better next time." All that next year he built and rebuilt his bower, painting the archway, smoothing the dancing floor, finding and arranging his decorations of the most beautiful blue. Almost half of his own feathers were satiny blue now, and he practiced his singing and his dancing, too.

That spring, three birds came to his bower, and he sang and danced for each of them. Two of them left when he

was finished, and one of them stayed for a little while, but none of them joined him on the dancing floor.

Once again, Kejaro was sad, but once again he promised himself: "I'll do it better next time." All that year he worked hard, trying to build the most beautiful bower in the world. When spring came again, all of his own feathers were dark satiny blue. He gleamed in the sunshine, and his eyes were as blue as the sky.

One morning, a lovely green and brown bird with pale blue eyes came to his bower. She watched as he danced and sang his best for her. Kejaro finished his song and waited, hoping she thought he was handsome and graceful and charming, hoping she would stay.

She hopped over to him and said, "My name is Camira."

"My name is Kejaro," he told her, wondering if she would be his lady love.

Camira fluttered her wings a little and said, "You have built the most beautiful bower in the world."

And Kejaro was happy, for that meant he had finally done it right this time.

Then he was happier still, for Camira joined him on the dancing floor, and the two of them danced together inside the most beautiful bower in the world.

**WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 9:  
LEADER RESOURCE 1: MURAL IMAGE — BOWERBIRD**

"Satin Bowerbird" from [iStockphoto](#).



## FIND OUT MORE

View more creativity in nature on these Youube videos [David Attenborough on bowerbirds \(9:28\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgHwdLiKlPQ&feature=related) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgHwdLiKlPQ&feature=related](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgHwdLiKlPQ&feature=related)) or [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1zmfTr2d4c&feature=related) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1zmfTr2d4c&feature=related](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1zmfTr2d4c&feature=related)) (includes images of the bowerbirds mating). YouTube offers [many videos of the painting elephants](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=painting+elephants+of+Thailand&oq=painting+elephants+of+Thailand&aq=f&aqi=&aql=&gs_l=youtube-psuggest.3...7156.9130.0.9282.12.12.0.0.0.0.163.1447.1j11.12.0...0.0.) (at [www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=painting+elephants+of+Thailand&oq=painting+elephants+of+Thailand&aq=f&aqi=&aql=&gs\\_l=youtube-psuggest.3...7156.9130.0.9282.12.12.0.0.0.0.163.1447.1j11.12.0...0.0.](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=painting+elephants+of+Thailand&oq=painting+elephants+of+Thailand&aq=f&aqi=&aql=&gs_l=youtube-psuggest.3...7156.9130.0.9282.12.12.0.0.0.0.163.1447.1j11.12.0...0.0.)) of Thailand.

Learn more about the emotional lives of animals from these books:

*The Souls of Animals* by Unitarian Universalist minister Gary Kowalski (Stillpoint Publishing 1991)

*When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals* by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy (Delacorte Press, 1995)

*The Pig Who Sang to the Moon: The Emotional World of Farm Animals* by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Ballantine Books, NY, 2003)

Visit the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) or the UUA's [Green Sanctuary](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) program to learn how UUs are involved in taking care of the earth.

# SESSION 10: JOY IN NATURE: ANIMAL PLAY

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*The world is mud-luscious and puddle-wonderful. — e.e. cummings, 20th-century American poet (Unitarian)*

Playing helps animals (including humans) learn and practice skills, develop social bonds, and relieve stress. Participants experience the joy of play in a session that demonstrates the well-being that results from maintaining a spiritual orientation of joy. The Faith in Action activity extends this learning by introducing the importance of animal enrichment. Participants are empowered to take action by donating toys they have made to a local animal welfare organization.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the spiritual dimension and physical benefits of play
- Foster empathy for animals particular to their playfulness and a sense of connection with all creatures in the web of life that play
- Build community in the group through playing together
- Empower participants as leaders in the group
- Draw on direct observation of the natural world as one of the Sources of Unitarian Universalism
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Develop awareness of how animals play, through a story about otters
- Experience the benefits of play, first-hand, and understand connections between animal play and human play
- Understand how play is a feature of the interconnected web of life

- Experience leadership roles in the group.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — The Way of the Otter	10
Activity 3: Animal Charades	10
Activity 4: Moving Obstacle Course	15
Activity 5: Favorite Games	10
Faith in Action: Toys for a Local Animal Shelter	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Cloud Watching	10
Alternate Activity 2: Laughter Yoga	20
Alternate Activity3: Animal Play Videos	15

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for several minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. Read Alternate Activity 2, Laughter Yoga. Sit comfortably and pay attention to your body and your spirit. Are parts of your body tense? How do you feel? Do you feel connected to your spirit? Follow the instructions for Laughter Yoga and laugh as directed. When you are finished, take a moment to pay attention to your body and your spirit again. What has changed? How are you feeling physically? How do you feel spiritually?

Bring a spirit of joy and playfulness to this session, and allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

— adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we are going to play! Playing is important to all kinds of animals, including you and me. It's one of the ways we are connected with other creatures in the web of life. Do you have an animal companion at home? What are some of the ways you play together?

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a very wide span in terms of reading abilities; point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.



Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE WAY OF THE OTTER (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[The Way of the Otter](#)" (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as a stuffed or plastic otter, some rocks, juggling balls, images of animals at play
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions and choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, read or tell the story, "The Way of the Otter."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion using questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- What kind of play in nature have you ever observed?
- Do you think that all animals play? Why or why not?
- Is there a point to animal play in nature?
- Do you know how some animals invite another to play?
- What can we do as Unitarian Universalists to help make sure animals can continue to play in the wild?

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 3: ANIMAL CHARADES (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Leader Resource 1, [Animal Charades](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Designate a large space, preferably outdoors.

### Description of Activity

This activity is a basic game of charades with a twist designed to get everyone laughing.

Gather the group in a large circle. Have one child choose an animal and move to the center of the circle to act it out. (Optional: Suggest animals from Leader Resource 1.) Encourage actors to use motions and behaviors, as well as sounds.

The others try to guess which animal it is. Once the animal is known, everyone then acts it out, following the actor's motions or creating their own. Take turns so everyone who wants to gets a chance to be the animal actor.

## ACTIVITY 4: MOVING OBSTACLE COURSE (15 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Designate a large space, preferably outdoors.
- Decide how you will form groups.
- Prepare a list of physical and verbal obstacles you can suggest to the small groups.

### Description of Activity

This cooperative game activity can be done inside or outside, you simply need a large enough space.

Form several small groups of various sizes. Each group makes itself into a human obstacle. These could be physical or verbal obstacles. If the small groups have difficulty deciding what kind of obstacle to be, give some suggestions. Physical obstacles could be:

- The small group holds hands and the players have to climb or jump over their arms at knee height or waist height.
- The small group lies down on their backs with their feet together in the air (like an arch) and players have to crawl underneath.

Verbal obstacles could be:

- Ask the players to stop and do 10 jumping jacks or hop on one foot for 5 seconds.
- Ask the players to act out their favorite animal.

Players then run the course with their small group. When they get to an obstacle, the obstacle tells them how to pass. As a group of players passes an obstacle, the people in the obstacle become another group that runs the course. When a group gets to the end of the course, they create another new obstacle. This is a fun activity that can go on for as long as you want. You can vary this by not allowing talking or by adding non-human obstacles.

### Including All Participants

Consider any mobility issues in the group when determining the type of obstacles, to ensure all participants can complete the obstacle course.

## ACTIVITY 5: FAVORITE GAMES (10 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Designate a large space, preferably outdoors.

### Description of Activity

Go outside. Let the children pick a favorite game—freeze tag, Simon Says, hide and seek. Make sure everyone knows how to play. Let them play until they want to play a new game or time runs out.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 2, [Mural Image — Otters](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 2, Mural Image — Otters, preferably in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

### Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say, in these words or your own:

Today we learned that playing is very important in the web of life. We learned that when we laugh and play our hearts and spirits are filled with happiness and joy. Unitarian Universalists believe all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like the web on our mural. Each time we meet we add something new to the World of Wonder mural. Today we add a picture of an otter, to remind us of the importance of play in our lives and in the web of life.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: TOYS FOR A LOCAL ANIMAL SHELTER

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Animals Toys from Recycled Materials](#) (included in this document)
- Toilet paper tubes
- Clean, used jeans, sweatshirts, fleece items, or old rope
- Scissors, including left-handed scissors
- Bags or boxes for finished animal toys
- Closing Song poster from Session 1 (see Session 1, Leader Resource 4)
- Optional: A copy of the story, "[Henry Bergh](#) (at [www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/riddle/session11/sessionplan/stories/157390.shtml](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/riddle/session11/sessionplan/stories/157390.shtml))," from the Tapestry of Faith program Riddle and Mystery

### Preparation for Activity

- Consult with the religious educator to set a date for this activity and decide whether to make and deliver the toys in the same session or two different sessions.
- Select a local animal shelter to receive the toys and get permission and suggestions for the toys you will make.
- Gather materials for the toys from the congregation and ask for volunteers to help with toy-making.
- Recruit additional volunteers to photograph or video the toy making as well as the visit.
- Arrange work tables, one project per table, with the needed materials.
- If you will deliver the toys in this session, make appropriate arrangements for the field trip.
- If you are not able to visit, invite a representative of that shelter to pick up the toys, visit with your group, and talk about the needs of the animals they care for—why the animals need help and what their organization does to help them. Ask them to address the need that animals have to

play and encourage them to prepare stories about animals they have seen playing.

- Optional: Read a story about Unitarian Henry Bergh, founder of the American Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals, in the Tapestry of Faith curriculum for 6th grade, [Riddle and Mystery](#) (at [www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/riddle/session11/sessionplan/stories/157390.shtml](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/riddle/session11/sessionplan/stories/157390.shtml)). Consider adapting the story for this age group and telling it while the children work on making toys.

### Description of Activity

#### Part I, Making the Toys

Having learned about the importance of play, this activity empowers participants to take action to benefit shelter cats and dogs by making toys for them to play with. Care of the earth is reinforced by using recycled materials (be sure to point this out to the group).

Gather in a circle. Ask children to tell you briefly why playing is important for animals. Affirm that animals learn when they play, and playing reduces animals' stress and helps them create bonds with other animals.

Say, in these words or your own:

When animals are kept in captivity, like in a zoo or at an animal shelter for dogs and cats that don't have homes, they stay healthier and get sick less often if they are allowed to play. Today we are going to make toys for cats and dogs to play with while the animal shelter tries to find them a good home. This will help the animals stay happier and healthier.

Set up the materials for each toy at a different table and staff each table with a volunteer (a congregational youth group may enjoy leading these projects). Divide children into small group at each table, and explain that they will move from table to table to make different toys. Each table leader will demonstrate how to make the toys.

Optional: If you are not taking the toys to a shelter or having a shelter representative come today, close the session by gathering participants in a circle and leading a brief discussion with questions such as:

- I wonder how making the toys can help the web of life.
- I wonder what else we could do to help animals.
- Have you ever played with an animal or seen an animal playing? What was it like?
- I wonder why play is important in the web of life.

Close by saying:

As Unitarian Universalists we believe it is important to take care of all of the living beings

in the web of life because we are all connected to each other.

Ask the World of Wonder children to lead participants in the song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Plan to share the photos or video with the children.

## Part II, Delivering the Toys

By creating and donating toys to a local animal shelter, participants make a concrete connection with the animals that they are helping. This both fosters empathy and also empowers the children as caregivers.

If possible, travel together to the animal shelter to donate the toys. If you are visiting a shelter, take a tour and visit with the animals there. As you go, encourage the children to notice how the animals are behaving and especially watch for playfulness.

Or, gather the participants who worked on the toys at your congregation with a representative of the shelter that will receive the toys. Have the representative talk briefly about the animals they serve, addressing the need that animals have to play and sharing stories about animals they have seen playing.

When you are finished, gather in a circle and briefly ask children what they know about why playing is important for animals. Remind them that when animals play: they learn, their stress is reduced, and they create bonds with other animals.

Process with questions such as:

- I wonder what the cats and dogs might do with the toys we gave them.
- Do you think the animals feel joy when they play?
- I wonder what else we could do to help animals.
- I wonder why play is important in the web of life.
- I wonder what you feel when you see animals playing.
- I wonder if you think it is important for Unitarian Universalists to help animals. Why?

Close by saying:

As Unitarian Universalists we believe it is important to take care of all of the living beings in the web of life because we are all connected to each other.

Ask the World of Wonder children to lead participants in the song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

Plan to share the photos or video with the children in a subsequent session.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help?
- How was the timing? What needs to change for a session to work better within our time frame?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

The world is mud-luscious and puddle-wonderful. — e.e. cummings, 20th-century

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we played! We learned that, through play, animals, including humans, learn new skills, get exercise, relieve stress, and form social bonds. We learned that laughter and joy are very healthy for us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Considering our interdependence in the web of life, we added images of playful otters to our World of Wonder mural.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** what makes you laugh heartily and how you feel during and after such laughter. Tell each other your favorite jokes and share funny stories. Pay attention to and discuss the way you feel physically, emotionally, and spiritually after laughing together. You may enjoy watching this [short \(3 minute\) BBC video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhTi9zvGYp8) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhTi9zvGYp8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhTi9zvGYp8)) together; it shows animals at play and demonstrates how they learn from it. Discuss whether you believe animals feel joy.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...**

**A Family Adventure.** Visit a zoo, aquarium, farm, or other site that keeps animals. Specifically watch for animals that are playing. Notice with your child how they play. Do they play with each other? Do they use objects



as toys? Is it hard to tell the difference between playing and fighting? Do the animals appear to experience happiness? Ask the animal keepers or museum docents about any programs they have in place for animal enrichment, to provide an environment that is stimulating for the animals. Ask how opportunities for play are part of their animal enrichment program.

Ask the people responsible for the animals' daily care whether they think animals experience joy when they are playing.

**Family Discovery.** Go for nature walks and pause often to observe any living beings you encounter. Look for insects, birds, and mammals. Talk with your child about what you see them doing. Are they gathering food? Creating shelter? Fighting or threatening one another? Playing? Hiding from you? What behaviors do you notice that help you tell the difference? Select an animal that interests your child and research it together in books and online. Find out how this animal plays and how playing is beneficial for it.

**A Family Game.** Set aside a family games night and have each person select a favorite game for everyone to play—one that usually includes lots of laughter. Do a quick "body check" before and after each game, noticing your pulse and heart rate, any tension in your body, and your mood. Talk about what changed after playing together. If any game isn't fun or is especially competitive, notice how your body changes in that circumstance. Pay special attention to what actions or interactions raise your energy and create joy in your heart and spirit.

**A Family Ritual.** Try laughter yoga together as a family. Notice what happens in your bodies when you laugh, even when the laughter is fake. Once you are familiar with a few laughter yoga exercises, create a ritual of laughing together. This could be a great start to a day, a way to shift energy or moods, or a way to refocus attention. Videos of laughter yoga can be found [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EGTETc5oFU) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EGTETc5oFU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EGTETc5oFU)) or [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4WP1MfRoSA&feature=related) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4WP1MfRoSA&feature=related](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4WP1MfRoSA&feature=related)).

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: CLOUD WATCHING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Drawing paper on clipboards, and crayons or markers
- Optional: Beach towels

### Preparation for Activity

- Select an outdoor area where the children can lie down near one another and see the sky easily.

- Let parents know ahead of time that the children will be going outside and lying on the ground, so they can dress appropriately.

### Description of Activity

On a nice day with plenty of clouds in the sky, take the children outside. Ask them to bring appropriate outdoor clothing, and their imaginations.

Have each child find a comfortable spot where they can lie down and view the sky. Tell them to relax as they gaze up into the sky and look for shapes in the clouds. You can offer examples of things to look for (animals, plants, buildings, book or movie characters, food, geometric shapes, symbols) especially if they seem uncertain, but be sure they know they can look for any shape—anything at all.

Many children have watched clouds before and will need little encouragement, but some may resist. If a child does not want to lie on the ground, offer a beach towel or allow the child to sit on a bench or large rock, if one is nearby.

Suggest volunteers point to a cloud and share aloud with the group what they see it as. This can be very exciting with a large group. Or, you can ask them to look for shapes silently and remain quiet for several minutes.

When attention starts to wane, invite children to sit up quietly and think about the favorite shape that they saw. Distribute drawing supplies to children who wish to make pictures of their favorite cloud shapes, while others continue to cloud watch. When everyone is ready, share descriptions or pictures of their favorite clouds.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: LAUGHTER YOGA (20 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the Description of Activity, and practice the Laughter Yoga exercises until confident leading this activity. Or, invite a guest leader.
- Optional: Learn more about teaching Laughter Yoga to children on the [Live Strong website](https://www.livestrong.com/article/185797-how-to-teach-laughter-yoga-to-children/) (at [www.livestrong.com/article/185797-how-to-teach-laughter-yoga-to-children/](https://www.livestrong.com/article/185797-how-to-teach-laughter-yoga-to-children/)).
- Optional: On YouTube, [view video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EGTETc5oFU) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EGTETc5oFU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EGTETc5oFU)) of Laughter Yoga.

### Description of Activity

Children experience the capacity of laughter and playfulness to promote emotional and physical well-being, while learning a spiritual tool for shifting the state of their consciousness and nurturing positive energy.

Children are encouraged to think about how laughter and playfulness might be part of the web of life.

Gather the group in a standing circle. Ask if anyone has heard of yoga. Briefly explain that they will learn how to do a special kind of yoga, called laughter yoga. Explain that in laughter yoga, they will laugh even if there is nothing funny. Assure them that although it might feel a little strange at first, soon they will be laughing for real. Tell them people who do laughter yoga say laughter is so good for your body that even pretending to laugh is good for you. Tell them you will do a few laughter yoga exercises together and when they hear you clap they should copy what you are doing.

Have participants stand up straight with their feet together, toes slightly apart, and hands on their bellies. Invite them to close their eyes for a moment and notice how their bodies feel. Is anything uncomfortable? Do they feel relaxed? Happy? Worried? Ask them to open their eyes and take a deep breath in so that the breath goes all the way down to their bellies and they can feel their bellies rise underneath their hands. When they exhale they should laugh rhythmically "ha, ha, ha, ha, ha..." Repeat these actions together for a couple of minutes. End this exercise by holding your hands up over your head and clapping twice while saying, "ho, ho," and then three times, saying, "ha, ha, ha." Do this a few times until all children are doing it with you. Then stop and invite everyone to stand still and pay attention to their breathing again, silently noticing their body and how they feel.

Next, instruct the children to move around the room greeting each other, shaking hands. However, instead of greeting each other in words, they should laugh their greeting. They can greet the same person more than once. Repeat for a few minutes.

Again, after a few minutes of laughter, end the exercise by clapping twice and saying, "ho, ho," then saying "ha, ha, ha" three times. Continue until everyone has joined you. Then, stop, and invite participants to stand quietly and pay attention to their breathing with their hands on their bellies, taking deep breaths so they can feel their bellies rising up. Invite them to notice how their bodies are feeling.

Process the activity with questions such as:

- What differences did you notice in your bodies before and after you were laughing?
- I wonder if this was easy or hard to do.
- I wonder how it felt when you were laughing.
- I wonder how laughter is part of the web of life.
- When you are laughing, how do you feel in your body? In your heart and spirit?

- I wonder what it would be like if all people everywhere spent time doing laughter yoga every day.
- I wonder if how laughter yoga might help us when we are afraid or angry.

### Including All Participants

A participant who uses a wheelchair can do the Laughter Yoga exercises from a seated position.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: ANIMAL PLAY VIDEOS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Computer with Internet access or a DVD player/VCR, and a large monitor or digital projector
- Video footage of animals playing

### Preparation for Activity

- Preview and choose video footage of animals playing. Suggestions from YouTube include this [video of elephants](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icWOPQTKVh0&feature=related) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=icWOPQTKVh0&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icWOPQTKVh0&feature=related)) playing in the water or this one about [wild animals at play](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhTi9zvGYp8) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhTi9zvGYp8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhTi9zvGYp8)). Some suggested DVD's include: "Animals at Play," produced by Bfs Entertainment or "Zoboombafoo: Animals at Play," an episode of the PBS series, Zoboombafoo, both available from [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com/) (at [www.amazon.com/](http://www.amazon.com/)) or perhaps at your local library.
- Set up and test computer or video player, and and monitor or projector. Cue the footage you plan to show.

### Description of Activity

This activity fosters empathy and reinforces that many creatures benefit from playing.

Watch the video footage together. Then, guide children to process with questions such as:

- Did you see anything that surprised you? How about anything that made you laugh?
- I wonder what you noticed about how the animals played.
- Have you ever played like that?
- I wonder what the animals were feeling while they were playing.
- Have you ever played with an animal or watched an animal playing? What was it like?
- I wonder why playing is an important part of the web of life.

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 10: STORY: THE WAY OF THE OTTER

By Julie Simon.

Daniel firmly grips his paddle and pulls hard against the water. He watches as the paddle tip dives below the surface, then leaves behind a tiny whirlpool as the paddle rises above the water. The kayak glides forward. He peers into the tall cattails arching above the sides of the kayak and scans for mud chutes. A light breeze wafts his hair back from his eyes. But he cannot see the banks at all in the dim dawn light.

They paddle on and soon emerge from the cattails and reeds of the marsh channel, into a small open stream. The sun climbs and glows up over the horizon. Now Daniel can see muddy, grassy chutes among the roots and bushes covering the banks of the stream.

"Mom, over there," he whispers, pointing to some marshy grasses across from the second chute. "We can wait over there. If we're quiet, they won't notice us."

They slowly paddle the kayak to the spot Daniel has suggested, backing it in so they can look out at the chute, undetected among the grasses. Then they wait—quiet and watchful—breathing in the moist air. Daniel is prepared to wait the whole morning—or longer—if need be. He is an experienced otter spotter.

But he does not have to wait long today. Three river otters amble along the bank. They have long, slender, brown, fur-covered bodies, with long narrow tails, and cute faces with long whiskers. One is much bigger than the other two. A mom and her two pups are out looking

for breakfast. They slide down the mud chute into the stream unaware that they are being watched. Daniel is excited but he stays quiet, hardly breathing with delight.

The otters dive underwater looking for small fish, clams, and crayfish. They each find a meal and climb up the bank to enjoy it. Then the otters slide back down the chute and dive for more food. One of the pups must be full. He quickly emerges from under the water with a rock instead of a fish, flips onto his back, and tosses the rock between his front paws. He looks like he is juggling.

Daniel can barely keep back his giggles. But he is hoping for even more fun. Sure enough, after the other pup eats her fill of fish, she joins her brother juggling two rocks while floating on her back. Then her brother decides it's time to play slide and chase. He dashes up the bank and slides down the chute on his stomach. He lands in the stream with a *swoosh*, then dives and swims up beside his sister. She rolls and drops her rock. The two pups splash and roll across the stream. They chase each other up the bank and down the mud slide over and over again.

Eventually, Momma Otter finishes her breakfast too. She joins the pups in the slide and chase game. They are three otters rolling and splashing and frolicking their way along the stream.

Finally Daniel can no longer contain his laughter. He giggles through his fingers. The otters stop and look over at the reeds where Daniel and his mom are hidden. Then they scramble up the bank and disappear into the shrubs. Daniel sighs a tired, contented sigh. Now he will go have his own breakfast. He has seen the play of the otter.



## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 10: HANDOUT 1: ANIMALS TOYS FROM RECYCLED MATERIALS

[Braided Dog Toy](#) and [Toilet Paper Tube Cat Toy](#) from the Squidoo website.



### **Braided Dog Toy**

Cut fleece, old sweat-shirts, or old jeans into strips.

Take three strips and tie the ends into a knot, then braid the pieces together.

Tie off the other ends.

### **Toilet Paper Tube Cat Toy**

If there is any toilet paper left on the empty tubes, peel off as much as possible.

At one end of the toilet paper tube, use scissors to make slits about an inch long all around, trying to keep the slits as even as possible.

After you finish that end of the toilet paper tube, flip it over and do the same thing to the other end.

When the ends are all cut, splay out the ends of the toilet paper tube. Each end will look like a wheel with spokes.



Braided Dog Toy and Toilet Paper Tube Cat Toy from the Squidoo website, [www.squidoo.com](http://www.squidoo.com).

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 10: LEADER RESOURCE 1: ANIMAL CHARADES**

ELEPHANT	GIRAFFE
ANTEATER	SQUIRREL
MOSQUITO	FROG
ROOSTER	SNAKE
TURTLE	LION
APE	LIZARD
HUMAN BABY	WOODPECKER
HIPPOPOTAMUS	BUTTERFLY

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 10: LEADER RESOURCE 2: MURAL IMAGE — OTTERS**

From the blog, [Wonkybusker](#), by Jessica Ek; used with permission.



## FIND OUT MORE

On the website of the [National Institute for Play](http://www.nifplay.org/index.html) (at [www.nifplay.org/index.html](http://www.nifplay.org/index.html)) discover anecdotes, science, and opportunities to engage in play to transform ourselves and our world.

*The Souls of Animals* by Unitarian Universalist minister Gary Kowalski (Stillpoint Publishing, 1991) discusses the spiritual lives of animals.

A [YES! magazine article](http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/can-animals-save-us/we-second-that-emotion) (at [www.yesmagazine.org/issues/can-animals-save-us/we-second-that-emotion](http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/can-animals-save-us/we-second-that-emotion)) by Marc Bekoff, posted on March 2, 2011 delves into the emotions animals display, including joy, happiness, and empathy.

Visit the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) or the UUA's [Green Sanctuary](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) program to learn how UUs are involved in taking care of the earth.

# SESSION 11: KINDNESS IN NATURE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be measured by the way its animals are treated. — Mahatma Gandhi*

This session highlights kindness and altruism in the web of life and encourages participants to act for the welfare of other living beings. Kindness as a central tenet of Buddhism is introduced in the central story, "The Noble Ibex," in which an ibex saves the life of a king who was hunting for sport. The children hear real life examples of animals acting to save the lives of other species and act out the stories out in role plays that foster empathy and kindness.

Note: If you have access to a computer with Internet access, you can incorporate the You Tube and video images of animal altruism suggested in Alternate Activity 1 as part of Activity 3, Animal Altruism Stories and Dramatic Role Plays.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Demonstrate altruism in non-human parts of the web of life
- Foster empathy and a sense of connection with other living beings
- Encourage emotional intelligence, the ability to recognize their own and others' feelings and to respond helpfully when someone is distressed
- Empower participants as leaders in the group
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Consider kindness among non-human creatures, through real-life stories about animals helping people or one another and a Buddhist Jataka tale in which an ibex models kindness

- Develop their emotional intelligence, by observing and experiencing kindness and thinking of ways they can be helpful and kind
- Role play stories based on acts of helping and kindness
- Experience leadership roles in the group.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — The Noble Ibex	10
Activity 3: Animal Altruism Stories and Dramatic Role Plays	25
Activity 4: Clay Animals	10
Faith in Action: Kindness Cookies and Cupcakes Bake Sale	90
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: View of Nature — Animal Video Clips	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

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

Have you ever had a time when you felt that an animal expressed kindness to you, perhaps a dog or a cat? Reflect on the bond you felt with that animal.

In Western culture, humans tend to see ourselves as separate from the animal world. We believe our emotional and spiritual lives distinguish us from other creatures. What if that is not the case? Foster a spirit of curiosity and wondering, and allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.



## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.  
We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.  
We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.  
And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

—adapted from words by Alice Anacheka-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we will learn about kindness in our interdependent web of all existence. What do you think kindness is?I [Invite responses.] Kindness is when you care about a person or animal who is sad, hurt or scared and you want to help them feel better.

Can you think of a time when an animal showed you kindness?

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a very wide span in terms of reading abilities; point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — THE NOBLE IBEX (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[The Noble Ibex](#)" (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as a goat (an ibex), a king's crown, a horse, a bow and arrow, or pictures of these items
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions and choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say, in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, explain that this story is called a Jataka tale, which is a special kind of story from the Buddhist religion. In Jataka tales, the Buddha is reborn as an animal in order to teach people an important lesson. Note: An ibex is a kind of mountain goat. Tell or read the story, "The Noble Ibex."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion using questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- Have you ever had a human or animal show you compassion or kindness? If so, how?
- Have you ever observed an animal show another animal or a person compassion?
- What can we as Unitarian Universalists do, to show compassion or kindness throughout the web of life?

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.



## ACTIVITY 3: ANIMAL ALTRUISM STORIES AND DRAMATIC ROLE PLAYS (25 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Animal Altruism Stories](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Computer with Internet access and a large monitor or a digital projector other medium for showing video clips of animal altruism listed in Alternate Activity 1

### Preparation for Activity

- Familiarize yourself with the stories in Leader Resource 1, Animal Altruism Stories.
- Optional: If you plan to show video, preview the clips. On YouTube, find an animated rendering of [Dolphin Heroes 1: Shark Rescue](#) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxkJrv2UCGo&feature=fvwrrel](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxkJrv2UCGo&feature=fvwrrel)) and see footage of [Dolphin Heroes 3: Saving Whales](#) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fp\\_motddvnQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fp_motddvnQ)).

### Description of Activity

Children hear real-life examples of animals acting altruistically and consider whether this might be motivated by kindness. Recognizing emotions, empathy, and kindness are all fostered as participants role play and discuss the stories.

Read a story from Leader Resource 2, Animal Altruism Story. Show any relevant video clips. When you have finished ask for volunteers to act the story out. You may wish to read the story again as the children act it out.

Before each role play, ask each volunteer to name what they think their character (human or animal) might have been feeling.

After each role play, process with questions such as:

- I wonder, if you were the animal in this story, what would you feel?
- I wonder how the person or animal in danger was feeling.
- I wondered why they decided to help.
- I wonder if animals feel kindness.
- I wonder if any of these stories surprised you or made you feel a big "wow" of awe and amazement.
- I wonder how kindness is important in the web of life.

## ACTIVITY 4: CLAY ANIMALS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Air-hardening clay
- Newspaper or a plastic tarp

### Preparation for Activity

- Optional: Cover work surface.

### Description of Activity

Children create an animal to take home.

Say, in these words or your own:

We've talked about many different kinds of animals today. Can you remember some of them? [Wait for responses.]

We will use clay to create an animal—any one you choose. It might be one of the animals whose kindness we heard about, or it may be another animal that you know.

Give each participant a ball of clay. Have children share their creations with each other.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 2, [Mural Image — Dolphins](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 2, Mural Image — Dolphins, preferably in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

### Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we learned about kindness, which means caring when another person or living being is hurting and trying to help them feel better. Unitarian Universalists believe all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web

of life, like the web on our mural. Each time we meet we add something new to the World of Wonder mural. Today we add a picture of dolphins, like the ones we learned took actions to save people. The dolphins will remind us how important kindness is in the web of life.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## **FAITH IN ACTION: KINDNESS COOKIES AND CUPCAKES BAKE SALE (90 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Cookies and cupcakes
- Paper plates or napkins
- Price labels
- Container for cash, and money to give as change
- Poster board and markers or other sign-making materials
- Information about the organization the proceeds will support
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- Optional: Animal cookie cutters

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Solicit volunteers for a bake sale. Encourage parents to bake with their children for the event. Make the sale as "kind" (and green) as possible: encourage the use of fair trade and organic ingredients, use eggs from free range hens, include vegan baked goods (made with no animal products). Ask bakers not to use any nuts as ingredients, and to bring a written list of the ingredients in each item they bake. Optional: Give animal-shaped cookie cutters to parents who will bake for the bake sale.
- Familiarize yourself with the suggested organizations so you can briefly explain to the children what each organization does when they are making their selection.
- Together with the religious educator, select a time and place for the bake sale, such as during

coffee hour at your congregation, a local coffee house concert, or a local community festival.

- Announce the bake sale to the congregation. If appropriate, invite the board or other governing body to designate the non-pledge portions of one Sunday morning offering to the organization the children selected; if possible, have the children make an announcement during the worship service.

### **Description of Activity**

By raising funds to support animals in crisis, participants act with kindness in caring for other living beings.

Explain to the children that you will host a bake sale to raise money to help animals. Tell them briefly about the different organizations you can support and have participants vote to select an organization. Or, tell the children about the organization you have selected.

Have participants help make signs to promote sales, put price labels on baked goods, and help sell items. Donate proceeds to the organization you have selected.

You might donate to:

- A local animal shelter or wildlife rehabilitation organization
- An animal welfare organization, such as the [State Humane Association of California](http://www.californiastatehumane.org/) (at [www.californiastatehumane.org/](http://www.californiastatehumane.org/)) (SHAC), the [Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](http://www.mspca.org) (at [www.mspca.org](http://www.mspca.org)) (MSPCA), [New Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](http://www.njspca.org/) (at [www.njspca.org/](http://www.njspca.org/)) (NJSPCA), or the New-York based [American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](http://www.asPCA.org/) (at [www.asPCA.org/](http://www.asPCA.org/)) (ASPCA)
- [Stubby Dog](http://www.stubbydog.org) (at [www.stubbydog.org](http://www.stubbydog.org)), an organization "focused on changing public perceptions of pit bulls and dismantling the associated stereotypical thinking"
- An equine protection or rescue organization, such as Habitat for Horses or a small, family rescue such as [Blaze's Tribute Equine Rescue](http://www.blazesequinerescue.com/about.html) (at [www.blazesequinerescue.com/about.html](http://www.blazesequinerescue.com/about.html)) in Oklahoma
- [The Gorilla Foundation](http://www.koko.org/friends/donate.html) (at [www.koko.org/friends/donate.html](http://www.koko.org/friends/donate.html))
- [The Elephant Sanctuary](http://www.elephants.com/) (at [www.elephants.com/](http://www.elephants.com/)) or [The Elephant Nature Foundation](http://www.elephantnaturefoundation.org/go/foundation) (at [www.elephantnaturefoundation.org/go/foundation](http://www.elephantnaturefoundation.org/go/foundation))

- The [National Wildlife Federation](http://www.nwf.org/) (at [www.nwf.org/](http://www.nwf.org/))
- [The Wild Animal Sanctuary](http://www.wildanimalsanctuary.org/home.html) (at [www.wildanimalsanctuary.org/home.html](http://www.wildanimalsanctuary.org/home.html))
- [The World Wildlife Fund](http://www.worldwildlife.org/home-full.html) (at [www.worldwildlife.org/home-full.html](http://www.worldwildlife.org/home-full.html))
- [The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society](http://www.whaleadoption.org/) (at [www.whaleadoption.org/](http://www.whaleadoption.org/))

At the end of the bake sale, gather as a group and process the activity with questions such as:

- I wonder how our actions today showed kindness.
- I wonder what else we could do to help animals.
- I wonder how the money we raised might make a difference in the making more kindness in the interdependent web of life.

Say, in these words or your own:

As Unitarian Universalists we believe it is important to take care of all of the living beings in the web of life because we are all connected to each other.

End the activity by singing, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands," inviting the participants to add verses such as "dolphins and the whales (in our hands)" or "the cats and the dogs (in our hands)" with corresponding motions.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? Do we need more information or help?
- How was the timing? What needs to change for a session to work better within our time frame?
- Are we successfully creating a program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?

- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be measured by the way its animals are treated. — Mahatma Gandhi

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** We considered how kindness is important in the web of life and learned about real life examples of animals who have acted with altruism to save the lives of humans and other creatures. Our central story was a Jataka tale from the Buddhist tradition, in which the Buddha reincarnated as an ibex to teach a lesson of kindness and compassion.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** the stories they heard about gorillas, dolphins, polar bears, and elephants helping people and other animals. Share stories you know about animals comforting or helping people. Talk about ways you can show kindness to animals and how to recognize when an animal is in distress. Read [animal hero stories](http://www.squidoo.com/animalheroes) (at [www.squidoo.com/animalheroes](http://www.squidoo.com/animalheroes)) collected on the Squidoo website. Watch this story of [dolphins rescuing a surfer](http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/21689083#.UAhQW7Se5yV) (at [today.msnbc.msn.com/id/21689083#.UAhQW7Se5yV](http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/21689083#.UAhQW7Se5yV)) on the MSNBC website.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try...**

**A Family Adventure.** Go on a worm rescue mission! Worms need to stay moist in order to breathe. They come out of the ground when it rains because that is when they can safely do so to seek a mate. Once the rain stops, however, worms often get stuck on pavement where they are in danger of drying out and dying. After a rainstorm, go with your child to a paved area, such as a sidewalk, playground, driveway or parking lot. To rescue the worms, remove them very carefully and gently from the pavement and move them to a grassy or dirt-covered area.

**Family Discovery.** There are a number of fascinating instances of humans studying animals over a very long period of time and building relationships with them. These stories have much to teach us about animal intelligence and emotions. Discover them with your child using these websites and books:

- *Koko Love: Conversations with a Signing Gorilla* by Francine Patterson
- *Koko's Kitten* by Francine Patterson
- *My Life with the Chimpanzees* by Jane Goodall
- *Alex the Parrot: Bird with a Big Brain* by Stephanie Spinner

- [The Friends of Washoe](http://www.friendsofwashoe.org/) (at [www.friendsofwashoe.org/](http://www.friendsofwashoe.org/)) website
- [The Alex Foundation](http://www.alexfoundation.org/) (at [www.alexfoundation.org/](http://www.alexfoundation.org/)) website

**A Family Game.** A game of Emotions Charades builds everyone's emotional intelligence. Give each person a scenario and ask them to act out the feeling they might have in that scenario. Possible scenarios could include:

- Your younger sibling knocks down the tower you just finished
- Your older sibling tells you to "get lost"
- You see something to eat that looks delicious
- You accidentally spill water all over the floor
- Someone hits you
- You lose a game
- You fall off your bicycle
- You learn how to ride your bicycle
- You have nothing to do
- You are sick with the flu
- You receive an unexpected gift
- Someone jumps out at you
- A big dog chases you.

Once a feeling has been acted out and guessed correctly, discuss the scenario and ask everyone how they might respond with kindness to a person who has that feeling in that situation. Explain that there is no "right" feeling in any given situation. Different people might experience different emotions in the same situation.

**A Family Ritual.** Practice a kindness meditation. Read through this description, then lead your family in this ritual:

Sit comfortably and begin by paying attention to your breathing. Now have someone in the family name a form of suffering or hurting that exists in the web of life, such as elephants losing habitat, beached whales, or homeless kittens. As you breathe in, focus on kindness for the suffering. As you breathe out, visualize the web of life and all creatures as whole, healthy, and strong. Meditate with this focus on kindness and breathing for a few minutes. When you are finished, take a few minutes to share your experiences of the meditation with each other.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.
- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.
2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.

Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: VIEW OF NATURE — ANIMAL VIDEO CLIPS (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Computer with Internet access, and a large monitor or a digital projector and screen

## Preparation for Activity

- Preview the clips and decide which to show the group.
- Set up and test the equipment and Internet connection. Cue the video clips you plan to show.

## Description of Activity

Participants observe animal activity that seems to indicate love, kindness, or altruism.

Show the clips you have chosen from this list:

- A [television news report](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxYiLzWee84&feature=related) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxYiLzWee84&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxYiLzWee84&feature=related)) shows "unlikely companions."
- [Koko the gorilla](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqTUG8MPmGg) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqTUG8MPmGg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqTUG8MPmGg)) plays with a kitten and reacts to the news of the kitten's death.
- A [dog and cat](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeqzOodJ_Hc&feature=fvvr) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeqzOodJ\\_Hc&feature=fvvr](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeqzOodJ_Hc&feature=fvvr)) play with and care for baby chicks.
- A [hippopotamus attempting to save an impala from a crocodile](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoP0xSMYcY0&feature=related) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoP0xSMYcY0&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoP0xSMYcY0&feature=related)). Note: The attempt is unsuccessful; footage ends with the crocodile eating the impala. You might want to stop the video at the point when the hippo walks away from the impala.
- [One male tortoise](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zr1GfR8wceE&feature=related) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zr1GfR8wceE&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zr1GfR8wceE&feature=related)) flips another from its back onto its feet. Note: Not shown is the context in which this happens: The first male shoves the other onto its back to interrupt it in mating. The clip shows the first tortoise helping the other back onto its feet afterward.
- [Sheep appear](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9Nnm6aMbso&NR=1&feature=fvwp) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9Nnm6aMbso&NR=1&feature=fvwp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9Nnm6aMbso&NR=1&feature=fvwp)) to try to help an injured bird by nudging it.
- [Dolphin saves pygmy whales](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fp_motddvnQ) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fp\\_motddvnQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fp_motddvnQ)) that are beached and leads them back to the ocean.
- In an animated enactment, [dolphins protect humans from a shark attack](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxkJrv2UCGo&feature=fvwr) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxkJrv2UCGo&feature=fvwr](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxkJrv2UCGo&feature=fvwr)).

After you show the clips, process the activity with questions such as:

- I wonder if you saw anything that surprised you or made you feel a big, "Wow" of awe.
- I wonder what you thought the animals might be feeling.
- I wonder if animals feel kindness.
- I wonder how we can show kindness for all of the living beings in the interdependent web of all life?

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 11: STORY: THE NOBLE IBEX: A JATAKA TALE**

From the book *Kindness: A Treasury of Buddhist Wisdom for Children and Parents*, collected and adapted by Sarah Conover.

Once upon a time, the Buddha was born as a magnificent ibex. The forest in which he lived was far from civilization and therefore tranquil, inhabited by many creatures both small and large. Along the banks of clear, babbling brooks were found rare flowers, which blossomed nowhere else on earth. Trees towered above the lush undergrowth and kept the forest cool and mild.

The noble ibex that lived in this forest, the Former Buddha, was as beautiful as he was sleek and swift. He had the body of an animal but the intelligence and empathy of a human being. So deep was his kindness for all living creatures that he often trod delicately so as not to crush anything. He ate nothing but the tips of grasses already gone to seed.

As this region was renowned for its great beauty, hunting parties would at times make long journeys to reach it. On one such occasion, a king and his friends camped on the edge of the forest, hoping to bag large amounts of game before the end of their stay. One morning, the king set out on horseback with his small group following him. Not long after, the king caught a glimpse of the splendid ibex and wanted to hunt him down. Snapping his reins across his horse's neck, the king dashed away in chase, leaving the group far behind.

When the ibex heard the quick pounding of hooves, he turned and saw the king swiftly bearing down upon him. The king's bow was drawn taut and an arrow ready in the sites. Although the ibex could have fought the king's attack, he chose to avoid violence, even in self-defense. So the ibex spun around and took off with great speed towards the dense center of the forest, confident the king could not catch him. Through the thick forest he sprang, still pursued by the king, but the distance between them was increasing. The ibex came to a familiar, small, deep chasm and leapt over it effortlessly. But the king's horse, coming to that same rocky cliff, abruptly pressed his weight backwards and refused to jump. The king had been watching the ibex, not the forest floor. So when the horse stopped with a jolt, the surprised king fell forward, headlong, into the chasm.

After a time, the ibex heard no hoof beats in pursuit. He slowed and twisted his head around to examine the situation behind him. There in the distance he spotted the rider-less horse at the chasm's edge and correctly guessed what had happened to the king. A sudden

welling of kindness overcame him. He anticipated that the king must be in severe pain, surely having broken a number of bones in the fall. He knew also that the king would never survive long in this forest because there were many tigers and other beasts.

The ibex walked up to the chasm edge and saw the king far below, moaning and writhing in pain. He no longer looked upon the king as his enemy, but felt his suffering keenly. The Former Buddha gently inquired, "I hope your majesty has no serious wounds? Might the pain of your injuries be diminishing by now?"

The king looked up at the ibex in utter astonishment. He felt a dreadful pang of remorse for his behavior towards this noble animal. Oh, how the king felt his shame!

"You see, your Excellency," comforted the ibex, "I am no wild devil to be hunted for sport. I am just a peaceful creature living within the bounds of this beautiful forest."

"Oh!" blurted the king. "It is I who acted as a beast, not you! Can you ever forgive me?" he asked. "My physical pain right now," continued the king, "is far less than the pain I feel for having threatened a noble creature as yourself."

"Sire," responded the ibex, "let me help you out of your predicament. I can rescue you if you'll trust me." The ibex took the king's silence as a sign of goodwill and knew that the king would accept his help. He then searched for a boulder as heavy as a man and practiced lifting it. When he felt he could do it safely, without slipping, he made his way down the rocks beside the king. "If you mount me as you would your horse, your Excellency, I believe I can leap out of the chasm with you on my back," offered the ibex.

The king followed these directions and held on as best he could. In an instant the ibex leapt in a great arc onto the cliff rim. There the king found his waiting horse but was so overtaken by the goodness of the ibex he could not leave. "What can I do to repay you?" begged the king. "If you would come to my palace, we would see that your every need was met. I can't bear to think of you left in this forest with hunters in pursuit. Please, please come back with me," insisted the king.

"Sire, do you think I, who am so contented in the forest, could really adjust to that? I love nothing better than to live here, in peace. But there is one great favor I would ask of you."

"Anything," said the king.

"I ask that you give up hunting for sport. You now realize that all creatures want happiness and security. Can it be right to do to them what you yourself would despise? A true king," proclaimed the ibex, "will gain his people's love by showing great goodness, not by showing power."



The grateful king agreed to the request. "Now, let me show you the way back to safety," suggested the ibex. "Mount your horse and I will guide you home to your camp."

The king soon returned to his palace, and the ibex disappeared into the shelter of the forest. But

forevermore, the king lived by the wise words of the noble ibex, the Former Buddha. He forbade hunting for sport throughout his kingdom's domain. He protected his people, but no longer waged costly wars against nearby countries. His kingdom flourished. And thus, the good king was greatly loved and respected by his people as the gentlest and wisest of all kings.



# **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 11:**

## **LEADER RESOURCE 1: ANIMAL ALTRUISM STORIES**

### **Dolphin Heroes 1: Shark Rescue**

One time, a man named Todd was surfing in the ocean in California. Just as he hit a really good wave, a very big shark appeared out of nowhere and knocked into him on his surf board. It came back and bit him twice, once on his back and once on his leg. Fortunately, there were some bottle-nose dolphins in the area. They quickly surrounded Todd and swam in circles around him, keeping the shark away so it couldn't attack him again.

Todd's friend came and helped him swim to shore. He went to the hospital and they sewed him up where he had been bitten. He was very badly injured but the dolphins had saved his life.

### **Dolphin Heroes 2: Saved from Drowning**

Another time, a 14-year-old boy named Davide fell off his parents' boat into the ocean. Davide could not swim and his parents did not know he had fallen into the ocean. As he struggled, a dolphin swam to him and helped to keep him above the water. Davide held onto the dolphin until his father noticed what was happening and was able to pull him back onto the boat. The dolphin saved him from drowning.

### **Dolphin Heroes 3: Saving Whales**

One time a mother pygmy whale and her baby calf swam too close to the shore. They got "beached," which means they were stuck in the sand. When this happens to whales, they die. People were trying to help the whales get back out to the ocean but it wasn't working. The whales were very agitated and they could not seem to find their way past a sandbar. Then a dolphin named Moko came to the rescue, seeming to be responding to their distress calls.

Moko swam around the whales while the people watched. The whales calmed down and within minutes Moko had led the whales through a narrow channel back to the ocean. Moko saved the whales' lives!

Optional: use together with this video clip: (Dolphin saves pygmy whales that are beached and leads them back to ocean.)

### **Tuk the Polar Bear**

Tuk was a polar bear that lived in the Vancouver Zoo in Canada. One day a man ran past his enclosure and threw a tiny baby kitten into the pool in Tuk's cage. Everybody watched with horror wondering if the kitten would drown or if Tuk might kill it. Instead, Tuk slipped quickly into the water and carefully pulled the kitten out of the water, carrying her carefully in his teeth. He lay down with her by the water and gently licked her clean.

### **Elephants Free Antelopes**

In South Africa, some scientists were rounding up antelopes as part of a breeding program. The antelopes were being kept in a big enclosure with locked gates. As the scientists watched, a herd of 11 elephants came over to the enclosure. The scientists thought the elephants wanted some of the alfalfa which they were feeding the antelopes. Instead of trying to eat, however, the matriarch of the herd came over by the enclosure and used her trunk to open all of the metal latches which were holding the gate closed. The elephants watched while the antelopes escaped and then walked away themselves.

### **Gorilla Helps Toddler**

At the Brookfield Zoo in Illinois, a three-year-old boy climbed up the wall of a gorilla enclosure. He fell in and was knocked unconscious. People were very afraid the gorillas might hurt him. Instead, Binti Jua, a Western Lowland Gorilla female, came over to the boy. Carrying her own baby as well, she lifted him up gently and carried him to the door where zoo keepers could come and help him.

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 11: LEADER RESOURCE 2: MURAL IMAGE — DOLPHINS**

"Two bottlenosed dolphins up close" from Office.com, a division of Microsoft Corporation(R).



## FIND OUT MORE

Read [animal hero stories](http://www.squidoo.com/animalheroes) (at [www.squidoo.com/animalheroes](http://www.squidoo.com/animalheroes)) collected on the Squidoo website. Watch this story of [dolphins rescuing a surfer](http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/21689083#.UAhQW7Se5yV) (at [today.msnbc.msn.com/id/21689083#.UAhQW7Se5yV](http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/21689083#.UAhQW7Se5yV)) on the MSNBC website. Explore these books:

*When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals*, by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy (Delacorte Press, NY: 1995)

*The Pig Who Sang to the Moon: The Emotional World of Farm Animals*, by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Ballantine Books, NY: 2003)

*The Souls of Animals* by Unitarian Universalist minister Gary Kowalski (Stillpoint Publishing, 1991)

Visit the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) or the UUA's [Green Sanctuary](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) program to learn how UUs are involved in taking care of the earth.

# SESSION 12: BEAUTY IN NATURE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Imagine a glorious full moon coming over the tops of the spruce, big and yellow, shedding a mysterious light on everything... the moonlight had colour, you could see to paint and be able to appreciate the colour of things. — Arthur Lismer, Canadian Unitarian artist, 1948*

This session explores the universal need for beauty and cultivates children's appreciation of nature's beauty. Activities draw from the UU Source, "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life." We experience great awe and wonder when contemplating the elegance of the systems and the beauty of the materials that sustain all of Earth's abundant and diverse life forms. Perhaps along with our survival needs, it is the love and appreciation for the planet's beauty that moves us to protect it.

If you are not able to go outdoors for Activity 3, Eyes on Nature, use Alternate Activity 3, Appreciating Nature Indoors.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Call attention to nature's beauty and the ways it inspires us
- Stimulate observation and creativity, by guiding children to notice and evoke beauty in the natural environment
- Encourage participants to express their enjoyment of nature's beauty
- Demonstrate that nature's beauty is within us, too
- Foster reverence, awe, and wonder.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Identify aspects of nature they find beautiful, and share with the group
- Learn how Canadian Unitarian artist and art educator Arthur Lismer noticed and responded to nature's beauty

- Sharpen observation skills by becoming a "Nature Camera"
- Express nature's beauty in a work of art
- Perform leadership roles in the group.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — Treasure Stones	10
Activity 3: Eyes on Nature	20
Activity 4: Reflecting on Beauty	15
Faith in Action: Sowing Seeds of Beauty	60
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: Sensory Beauty Walk	20
Alternate Activity 3: Appreciating Nature Indoors	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for several minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. Picture in your mind's eye your favorite places to play in nature when you were a child. If you did not grow up with such opportunities, choose a time from any period of your life. After you've got one or two places in mind, consider the following:

- Where did you picture yourself?
- What season came into your mind?
- What made the place beautiful? Which of your senses were activated—sight, hearing, smell, touch, or taste?

Think about the idea that what we love, we protect. Allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

—adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Beauty can mean something that gives pleasure to your senses, like something that is not only wonderful to look at, but also listen to like the song of a bird, or smell like the fragrance of a rose. Today we will learn more about beauty in nature.

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a very wide span in terms of reading abilities; point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the

earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — TREASURE STONES (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Treasure Stones](#) (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as stones, an Arthur Lismer painting, a paintbrush, a painter's palette, a paint-covered smock
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions and choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, read or tell the story, "Treasure Stones."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion using questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- Do you have any nature treasures that you like to collect?
- Have you ever seen a stone that changed colors or looked different in the shade or sunlight?
- Have you ever found something in nature that looked different depending on the angle you viewed it from? Or something that looked different when you got it home?
- What do find beautiful in nature?
- Have you ever brought something from nature into your home to make your home beautiful? If so, what?
- How can we as Unitarian Universalists help to protect the beauty in nature?

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 3: EYES ON NATURE (20 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Choose an outdoor location, preferably with a diversity of living things.



- Gather materials for Activity 4, Reflecting on Beauty, and take them with you so that you can complete Activity 4 outdoors.

### Description of Activity

Bring the group outside. Tell the children they will have a chance to become both a "Camera" and a "Photographer." They will practice their observation skills and to view scenes from various perspectives as they try different ways of framing what they see.

Tell the children that when everyone has taken pictures, they will have a chance in the next activity to "develop the film" by creating the pictures on paper.

Have the children form pairs. Explain that they will take turns being a Camera and a Photographer. Once the children have partners, have them decide who will start as the Camera and who will start as the Photographer, reminding them that they will switch roles later.

Explain that the Cameras will close their eyes and the Photographers will gently guide the Cameras to a location to make a picture. Everything is done in silence (or with whispered instructions to the ear if necessary). The Photographer should gently position the body and head of the Camera to set up the picture. Encourage the Photographer to use different types of shots, including close-up, long shots, or even a tilt or pan, as with a video camera. You can demonstrate or explain examples such as tilting the Camera down low and crouching close to view a wildflower, or having the Camera lie down on their back and looking up, into the trees and sky. When the shot is set up, the Photographer gently taps the shoulder of the Camera. The Camera then opens their eyes, counts silently to 10, gazes at the shot, and then closes their eyes again. Then the Photographer sets up the next "photo." Ask the Photographer to make 2 to 4 "photos" depending on the time you have. Then have partners switch roles.

### Including All Participants

Allow children who are not comfortable closing their eyes to simply lower their gaze when they are the Camera. Remind Photographers to be gentle in guiding the Cameras, taking into account any mobility issues.

If the group includes a child with blindness or significant visual impairment, ask your religious educator or ask a parent, directly, to learn parent preferences regarding activities in which the child cannot fully participate. Describe the activity to the parent. They may be able to suggest an adaptation that could be meaningful and comfortable for their child. You might suggest that a child who is blind can take a tactile approach to the Camera role, using their hands to feel the area immediately around them and then describing what they feel. However, it may be best to skip this activity.

## ACTIVITY 4: REFLECTING ON BEAUTY (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Drawing paper on clipboards for all participants, and a variety of implements such as color pencils, crayons, markers, chalk, or pastels

### Preparation for Activity

- Plan to lead this activity directly after Activity 3, Eyes on Nature, preferably in the same outdoor location.

### Description of Activity

After each child has had a chance to be a Camera and a Photographer, gather all the children together to share their favorite nature "photo."

Ask the children to describe the "photos" they took. Ask questions such as:

- I wonder if anything you photographed surprised you.
- Which was your favorite kind of shot?

Offer the children paper and drawing implements and invite them to recreate their photos. You can also invite them to reenact a photo, especially if their framing captured motion or activity in nature.

Allow time for participants to share their art work with one another. Optional, but recommended: While most children will want to take their pictures home, you might invite them to give their pictures to congregants who are ill or receiving pastoral care. Ask the director of religious education or the appropriate pastoral personnel to deliver the pictures. Be sure to have the children sign their names.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 1, [Mural Image — Lismar Painting](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1, Mural Image — Lismar Painting, preferably in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well)



- Post the World of Wonder mural
- Display the newsprint with lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

### Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we thought about how wonderful it is that the Earth provides so many things we find beautiful. Beautiful sights, beautiful sounds, beautiful fragrances. Unitarian Universalists believe that that all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like the web on our mural. Each time we meet we add something new to our World of Wonder mural. Today we add a picture painted by Arthur Lismer, to remind us how important beauty is in the web of life.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: SOWING SEEDS OF BEAUTY (60 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Dry red clay and compost, perennial wildflower seeds suitable for your local climate, large bowls, and water
- Cookie sheets
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- Optional: Brown lunch bags and markers
- Optional: A copy of the book *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney

### Preparation for Activity

- Consult with the religious educator to schedule this event and decide how to distribute seed balls to the congregation.
- Decide how many seed balls to make, and purchase materials (or obtain donations).
- Recruit volunteers to help, including some to take photographs or video.
- Place seed balls ingredients at work tables.

- Optional: Set up a table with brown lunch bags and markers
- Optional: View an [instructional video on making seed balls](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSooimEQK7w) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSooimEQK7w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSooimEQK7w)), on YouTube.

### Description of Activity

Children make seed balls to give the gift of nature's beauty to their families, friends, and co-congregants.

Have participants sit at work tables with adult volunteers. Allow children to do as much of the work as is feasible. They can take turns measuring and mixing the ingredients. Include everyone in forming the seed balls. Have volunteers take pictures or video during the event.

To make the seed balls, mix together (with your hands) in a large bowl:

- 5 parts dry red clay
- 3 parts compost
- 1 part seeds (perennial wildflower seeds suitable for your climate)
- 1 part water

The mixture should be easily shaped into 1 inch balls (you do not want the "dough" to be too wet). Put the seed balls on cookie sheets or trays to dry.

Optional: Children may wish to decorate brown lunch bags with messages such as "spread beauty," or pictures of flowers.

Optional: Have a volunteer read Barbara Cooney's story, *Miss Rumphius*, about a woman who spreads beauty by sowing lupines.

In closing, ask the World of Wonder children to lead participants in the song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Distribute seed balls to the congregation, perhaps during coffee hour. If you have decorated brown lunch bags, provide these to congregants to hold the seed balls.

Plan to share the photos or video with the children next time the group meets.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately after the session, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? What information or help do we need?
- How was the timing? How can sessions work better within our time frame?
- Is our program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we do differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

Imagine a glorious full moon coming over the tops of the spruce, big and yellow, shedding a mysterious light on everything... the moonlight had colour, you could see to paint and be able to appreciate the colour of things. — Arthur Lismer, Canadian Unitarian artist, 1948

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we affirmed the value of appreciating Earth's natural beauty. We heard a story about Canadian Unitarian Arthur Lismer, an artist and art educator who was inspired by the natural world. We took turns being Cameras and Photographers, taking pictures of beauty in nature and "developing" them on paper.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER.** Talk about ways your family can enjoy the natural world even more often. On the Harvard Square Library website, read about [Arthur Lismer's camping trips](http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/unitarians/lismer.html) (at [www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/unitarians/lismer.html](http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/unitarians/lismer.html)) and how they inspired his art.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER.** Try... nature-inspired games, gardening, stargazing, or even cloud watching. Read [Christine Rafal's brief article](http://www.pbs.org/parents/creativity/np_outdoors.html) (at [www.pbs.org/parents/creativity/np\\_outdoors.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/creativity/np_outdoors.html)), about how nature has always inspired people to express their creativity.

**A Family Adventure.** Turn the ideas you talked about into real explorations—take a hike! Pack a picnic! Swing into a swimming hole! Love the Earth and all the ways she supports and inspires us... because what we love, we protect.

**Family Discovery.** On the [Art is Fun website](http://www.art-is-fun.com/nature-in-art.html) (at [www.art-is-fun.com/nature-in-art.html](http://www.art-is-fun.com/nature-in-art.html)), explore artists who were inspired by the beauty of the natural world. Research famous paintings online and have each family

member share their favorites. Better yet, visit a local art museum or photography exhibit together.

**A Family Game.** Ask your child to show you how to be a Camera and Photographer. Have all family members take turns creating pictures.

**A Family Ritual.** If you eat dinner together, perhaps designate one night a week to open the meal by hearing from each family member about something beautiful they experienced outdoors.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.
- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.
2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.

Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SENSORY BEAUTY WALK (20 MINUTES)

### Preparation for Activity

- Identify a safe, accessible, and naturally beautiful outdoor place for children to embark on a walk.

### Description of Activity

Ask the children to get ready to go outside. Tell them each will have a turn to "spy" something beautiful outside. Remind them that beauty can please any of our senses, so when it is their turn, they can say, "I spy with my eye something beautiful," or "I hear with my ear something beautiful" or "I smell with my nose something beautiful," and pointing to the matching organ (eye, ear, nose). (These gestures will provide helpful extra information in case children have trouble hearing one another on the walk.) Tell the children they may only use three of their senses today (no touching or tasting).

You might walk to a certain place and sit or stand all together before you begin "spying" beauty outdoors. It is fine to walk continually and allow children to take turns "spying" beauty all along the walk. Depending on the size of your group and the place you are walking, determine a configuration (single file, two lines... ) that will allow all children to hear and see one another as they guess what the spy is noticing. After each successful guess, allow the "spy" to rotate into a new position and the next child to spy something.

At the end of the walk, ask the participants if they usually notice so many beautiful things when they are outside, or did this help them notice more beauty?

### Including All Participants

Children with limited mobility may prefer help getting to just one location. Children with certain learning issues may be able to process the game better if the group stops walking when a spy is going to speak.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: APPRECIATING NATURE INDOORS (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Selection of natural items
- Drawing paper on clipboards, and art materials such as chalk, pastels, color pencils, markers, or watercolors (and brushes)
- Optional: Soft sculpture clay

### Preparation for Activity

- Gather natural items. You may choose a theme such as fruits and vegetables, flowers, seashells, or seeds and pinecones, or an eclectic arrangement. Be sure to include stones.
- Choose a place to display the natural items, where everyone can see them.
- If you have enough space and/or a very large group, set clusters of items at several areas. Arrange the natural items, or plan to have the children arrange them.

### Description of Activity

Drawing or painting an object requires careful attention, yet when we relate to something by drawing or painting it, we can truly connect with its beauty.

Indicate the arrangements of natural objects (or, ask the children to arrange the items themselves). Distribute drawing/painting materials, and give children time to draw an arrangement, or even just an interesting part of it.

Feel free to talk a little bit about the items. For example: "Isn't it amazing that gorgeous, deep purple eggplants, cheerful rounded red apples, and mysterious complicated pinecones all look so different and yet have the same function for the plants they came from: to protect its seeds?" Wonder at the different kinds of seeds in nature, and the variety of ways seeds are "packaged" in plants.

Afterward, ask the children if they saw the objects differently because they were trying to draw them. Cut open some of the fruits and let the children see for themselves the different arrangements of seeds inside. Do they notice designs or patterns? Ask if they ever have noticed the beautiful arrangements of fruits and vegetables if they have had a chance to go food shopping.

### Including All Participants

Offer soft clay to a kinesthetic learner who might prefer to sculpt or a child with visual impairment who might like to explore and represent the arrangements in a tactile way.

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 12: STORY: TREASURE STONES

By Janeen Grohsmeyer.

In a time not so long ago and in a place not so far away, there lived a boy named Arthur Lismer. Arthur always had a pencil in his pocket, because Arthur loved to draw. He drew clouds. He drew birds. He drew flowers. He drew many beautiful things. And he drew pictures of stones.

"Why are you drawing a boring old stone?" his friends would ask. "They're just... gray. They're just... rocks."

"Stones are beautiful," Arthur told them. "Just look. Some stones have gold flecks. Some have tiny crystals. In the rain, a stone can change color. In the sunshine, it can sparkle. Every stone is a treasure; every stone is beautiful. Just look!"

Arthur would draw pictures anywhere, anytime. He drew in the morning at the breakfast table. He drew during lunchtime at school. He drew on moonlit nights outside, surrounded by trees. He drew on train rides through the countryside. He even drew on Sundays in church.

"Put that away," his mother would tell him, and so Arthur would close his sketchbook and put his pencil in his pocket, and he would listen to their minister at the Unitarian chapel in Sheffield. But sometimes during the service he would still be thinking about drawing.

When Arthur was thirteen, he went to a special school for artists. After he was graduated, he sold his drawings to people. But he didn't make very much money at it.

So, when he was twenty-six years old, he decided to leave England and sail across the Atlantic Ocean, all the way to Canada. He got an ax and chopped up his desk, and he used its wood to build a trunk. He put some clothes and his drawing paper and his drawing pencils into the trunk, and he moved to Canada.

The trees and the flowers and the animals in Canada were all new to Arthur, and all of them were beautiful. He traveled to many places, going to the mountains and the prairies and the lakes and rivers of that great land, painting pictures of the things he saw.

People liked his pictures. They liked seeing the world through his eyes. Most people hadn't traveled very far, and Canada is a very big country. Arthur's pictures were like windows into a new world.

In his pictures, people could see a river of snow flowing down a mountainside. They saw trees with great gnarly roots all twisted together. They saw a church and houses surrounded by fields of grain. They saw gray

rocks colored bright red by the setting sun. They saw a tree bowing in the wind, and above it little white clouds following each other across the sky like little ducklings in a row.

People hadn't seen that before. They hadn't realized just how magnificent Canada was. "Just look," Arthur said. "Look and see."

Many people bought Arthur's pictures to put in their homes. People put his pictures in schools, and in offices, and even on stamps.

Five years after Arthur came to Canada, he became a teacher in an art school, showing people how to create art. Not just with paper and pencil, but with wire and cloth and felt and feather and bits of rock and all kinds of things.

On Saturdays, he taught classes in a museum. People of all ages came, all in the same room. Parents learned right along with their children. Arthur would talk for a while about the paintings, about the artists who created them and about where and when they were made. And then, he would ask everyone: "What do *you* see in that picture? What do you think it means? What do you like? What kind of beauty is there for you?"

On Sundays, he taught children at his Unitarian church. "Let's go outside!" he would usually say. "Let's see what we can find. Let's see."

"I found a stone," a little girl said one day. "It's just gray."

"Let's see," Arthur said. He licked his finger to get it wet. Then he rubbed his finger on the little stone. The stone turned pink and then purple and then gray again.

"It's like a rainbow!" the little girl said.

Arthur took out his pencil from his pocket (he always carried a pencil) and drew two small dots on one end of the stone, and then a long curving line on the other.

"It's like a mouse!" the little girl said.

He turned the rock over so they could see all the little spidery lines in the cracks.

"It's a like a map!" the little girl said.

Then sunshine came, and the rock began to sparkle.

"Now it's silver and gold!" she said. "It's like treasure."

"It is treasure," Arthur told her.

The little girl nodded. She held the stone that was a rainbow and a mouse and a map and a treasure tightly in her hand. "It's my treasure stone," she said. "I can see that now."

What kind of treasures do *you* see?



## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 12: LEADER RESOURCE 1: MURAL IMAGE — LISMER PAINTING

Arthur Lismer, from [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Lismer). *The Guides Home, Algonquin* (1914, National Gallery, Ottawa) was an experiment in impressionism.



## FIND OUT MORE

### Arthur Lismer (1885-1969)

Arthur Lismer was born in Sheffield, England, in 1885. His parents and grandparents were Unitarians, and the family attended the Unitarian chapel in Sheffield. As a boy, Arthur would leave behind the factories and row houses of the town and walk in the woods and fields and on the shore.

Though his family was working-class and money was tight, his parents encouraged him to attend the Sheffield School of Art. A scholarship enabled Arthur to take classes there from age 13 to 20. He also studied in Antwerp.

At the age of 26, he emigrated to Toronto, Canada, leaving behind his fiancée, Esther Mawson. One year later, he returned to England to marry her in the Unitarian church. The newlyweds settled in Canada.

Soon, Arthur became part of the "[Group of Seven](http://www.groupofsevenart.com/) (at [www.groupofsevenart.com/](http://www.groupofsevenart.com/))," artists who traveled through Canada and produced art that inspired pride in the country. He taught at the Montreal Museum of Art and at McGill University, and in 1916, at the age of thirty-one, he became the principal of the Nova Scotia School of Art. In 1929, he was the Educational Supervisor at the Art Gallery in Toronto. He wrote of the school, "The aim of the Art Centre is not to train artists, or teach art, or instruct in drawing, but to lead out from the child, encouraging every spark of feeling and originality and to aid in the extension and co-ordination of hand, eye and mind toward the development of a more emotionally active and alive little personality."

He and his wife, Esther, were active in the Unitarian churches in Toronto and Montreal. He died on March 23, 1969. A service was held at the Unitarian church on Sherbrook Street in Montreal.

Lismer paintings mentioned in the story "Treasure Stones" are [Evening Silhouette](http://bertc.com/subtwo/g35/lismer1.htm) (at [bertc.com/subtwo/g35/lismer1.htm](http://bertc.com/subtwo/g35/lismer1.htm)), [The Glacier](http://bertc.com/subtwo/g35/lismer15.htm) (at [bertc.com/subtwo/g35/lismer15.htm](http://bertc.com/subtwo/g35/lismer15.htm)), [Bon Echo](http://www.1st-art-gallery.com/Arthur-Lismer/Bon-Echo.html) (at [www.1st-art-gallery.com/Arthur-Lismer/Bon-Echo.html](http://www.1st-art-gallery.com/Arthur-Lismer/Bon-Echo.html)), [Sunlight in a Wood](http://www.galeriedada.com/arthur-lismer-sunlight-in-a-wood-00001213.html) (at [www.galeriedada.com/arthur-lismer-sunlight-in-a-wood-00001213.html](http://www.galeriedada.com/arthur-lismer-sunlight-in-a-wood-00001213.html)), and [Quebec Village](http://www.galeriedada.com/arthur-lismer-quebec-village-00001218.html) (at [www.galeriedada.com/arthur-lismer-quebec-village-00001218.html](http://www.galeriedada.com/arthur-lismer-quebec-village-00001218.html))

Many books show nature's amazing patterns. One is [Swirl by Swirl, Spirals in Nature](http://www.amazon.com/Swirl-Spirals-Nature-Joyce-Sidman/dp/054731583X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1336408639&sr=1-1) (at [www.amazon.com/Swirl-Spirals-Nature-Joyce-Sidman/dp/054731583X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1336408639&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Swirl-Spirals-Nature-Joyce-Sidman/dp/054731583X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1336408639&sr=1-1)) by Joyce Sidman.

Learn more about seed balls through the article, "[Environmentalists Adopt New Weapon: Seed Balls](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103129515) (at [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103129515](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103129515))," by [Margot Adler](http://www.npr.org/people/2100166/margot-adler) (at [www.npr.org/people/2100166/margot-adler](http://www.npr.org/people/2100166/margot-adler)) from NPR, April 15, 2009.

Visit the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) or the UUA's [Green Sanctuary](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) program to learn how UUs are involved in taking care of the earth.

# SESSION 13: GREEN ENERGY

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Question: How do energy conscious people think about wind power? Answer: They're blown away! — [United States Energy Information Administration](http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=riddles) (at [www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=riddles](http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=riddles))*

Energy is used to do work. Energy gives us the ability to do things such as climb a mountain, play soccer, and even think. And there are many types of energy—some stored in our muscles and brain cells to help our bodies move around and play, other types of energy we use to light a street lamp, heat or cool our homes, cook our food, and power buses, planes, and cars. Children learn that we get much of our energy from burning nonrenewable fuels—coal, petroleum or oil, or natural gas. But green energy comes from sources that are cleaner and less-polluting than most nonrenewable fuels. In this session, we introduce the concept of green energy and its importance in the interdependent web.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the concepts of energy and "green" energy
- Tell the story of the Danish island of Samso and the community problem-solving that helped achieve energy independence
- Teach ways to conserve energy.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn definitions of energy and "green" energy
- Consider a "real-life" story about green energy and community problem solving
- Understand ways to conserve energy and demonstrate leadership by encouraging others to conserve as well
- Make pinwheels or bookmarks, as a reminder of wind power

- Perform leadership roles.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — Green Like the Wind	10
Activity 3: Stand Up to Save Energy	10
Activity 4: Pinwheels	15
Activity 5: Speak Up to Save Energy	10
Faith in Action: Solar Oven Workshop	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: Solar Art	20

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for several minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. Think about the sources of the energy you and your family use in a typical day:

- How dependent are you on non-renewable sources of energy?
- What forms of green energy do you currently use?
- Are there ways you can develop cooperative partnerships concerning energy issues? In your congregation, with a local elementary school, or in the local community?

Allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.



## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

—adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table with a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we're going to talk about green energy. What do you suppose that is? What is energy? [Take responses.] Energy gives us the ability to do things such as climb a mountain, play soccer, and even think. Energy is used to do work. Energy causes movement. Every time you see something move, energy is being used. A leaf moving in the wind, a pot of boiling water, and a school bus traveling to school are all evidence of energy being used. Energy moves cars, makes machines run, heats ovens, and lights our homes. Most of the energy we use comes from burning fuels like coal, gas, or oil, which are things our earth will run out of someday. But green energy comes from sources that are cleaner and less-polluting and will last forever, like the sun, the wind, and water.

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a wide span in reading ability. Point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — GREEN LIKE THE WIND (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Green Like the Wind](#)" (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as a pinwheel, a representation of the sun, or a picture of a waterfall or dam
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Read the story questions. Choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick.

When the sound has completely disappeared, tell the story, "Green Like the Wind," which introduces the ideas of green energy, local energy, wind power, and cooperative community problem solving.

When the story is finished, guide the children in a brief discussion using questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- Do you know what we use to make electricity here?
- What are some ways that you save energy or use green energy in your family?
- Have you ever thought about using the wind, the sun, or water to make energy?
- Did you ever get together with a group of people to solve a problem? What happened?
- How can we as Unitarian Universalists choose green energy ourselves?
- How can we help others make green energy choices?

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 3: STAND UP TO SAVE ENERGY (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

### Preparation for Activity

- Recruit an adult volunteer to record the children's suggestions for energy saving.
- Optional: Read "[365 Ways to Save Energy](http://www.savewithces.com/365in2008.html) (at [www.savewithces.com/365in2008.html](http://www.savewithces.com/365in2008.html))" for more examples.

### Description of Activity

Tell the children that green energy also includes saving energy by not wasting it. For example, it saves energy if you keep the window closed when you run the air conditioner in the summer so the cold air doesn't escape. That way, you have less air to cool down.

Ask the children for some ideas or examples of saving or wasting energy.

Now explain that you are going say an activity aloud, and they should stand up if it saves energy or sit down if it wastes energy; if they are not sure, they can crouch somewhere between standing and sitting. Have them start sitting down.

Use the practices below and/or add your own:

- Taking showers instead of baths. (saves energy)
- Turning the lights off when they are not needed. (saves energy)
- Leaving the outside door open in the winter, letting the warm air out and the cold air in. (wastes energy)
- Turning off the TV when no one is watching it. (saves energy)
- Opening and closing the refrigerator door quickly. (saves energy)
- Washing dishes in the dishwasher, even if it's not full. (wastes energy)
- Walk or ride your bike to school instead of taking a car. (saves energy)
- Leave the water running while you brush your teeth. (wastes energy)
- Putting on a sweater when the room is cool, instead of asking someone to turn up the thermostat. (saves energy)

To conclude, ask the children for more ideas to save energy. Have the adult volunteer write their ideas in simple statements, to include in posters or bookmarks in the next activity.

### Including All Participants

If there are mobility concerns, do this activity by raising hands instead of standing.

## ACTIVITY 4: PINWHEELS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 1, [Pinwheel Template and Instructions](#) (included in this document)
- Pencils with attached erasers, and thumbtacks—one of each per participants, plus a few extra
- Scissors (including left-handed scissors) and color pencils or markers

### Preparation for Activity

- Copy Handout 1 for all participants, plus some extra.
- Read the pinwheel instructions and make a pinwheel, so you can confidently help children make their own.
- Optional: Invite a few extra adults or youth to help with this activity.

### Description of Activity

This activity offers a concrete example of green energy: wind power.

Ask if anyone has made a pinwheel before. Show the example pinwheel and ask what kind of energy will power the pinwheel.

Distribute materials at work tables, including a handout with the pinwheel wind turbine for each participant. Hold on to the thumbtacks and pencils until children are ready to assemble their pinwheels).

Invite children to decorate the pinwheels and draw pictures of green energy or ways to save energy. Then, help them cut out the pinwheel template and assemble their pinwheels.

## ACTIVITY 5: SPEAK UP TO SAVE ENERGY (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint from Activity 3, Stand Up to Save Energy
- Cardstock for bookmarks; poster board for posters
- Markers or crayons

### Preparation for Activity

- Cut cardstock into bookmark size strips (approximately 8.5 x 2 inches).
- Post newsprint from Activity 3 where all can see.

## Description of Activity

Children make bookmarks or posters with tips for conserving energy. This will help them remember the energy saving ideas they "stood up for" in Activity 3 and enable them to share the ideas with friends and family.

Tell the group that they can create a bookmark or poster with some (or all) of the energy-saving ideas from Activity 3. Have participants choose whether to write and illustrate one tip or create a list of ideas.

As writing ability varies, invite children to dictate their ideas to leaders.

Optional: Create a display of posters (and bookmarks) to share with the congregation at coffee hour.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 1, [Mural Image — Wind Turbine](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1, Mural Image — Wind Turbine, preferably in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the newsprint with lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

## Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we learned about green energy—energy which comes from sources that are cleaner and less-polluting and will last forever, such as the sun, the wind, and water. Unitarian Universalists believe that all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like the web on our mural. Each time we meet we add something new to our World of Wonder mural. Today we add a picture of wind turbines, to remind us of working together for more green energy sources.

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the Song Leader to

start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: SOLAR OVEN WORKSHOP

### Materials for Activity

- Handout 2, [Solar Oven Instructions](#) (included in this document)
- Cardboard pizza box, newspapers, a ruler, a marker, a box knife or sharp scissors, aluminum foil, black construction paper, clear plastic wrap, tape, and glue
- A stick, large straw, or wooden spoon
- A tin pie plate or a glass dish
- Ingredients for a treat to cook in solar oven, such as s'mores, bread or tortilla with cheese, or nachos
- Oven mitts
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- Information about [Solar Cookers International](#) (at [solarcookersinternational.org/](http://solarcookersinternational.org/)) to share

### Preparation for Activity

- Consult with the director of religious education to choose a date and time for the workshop and communicate to families (you may wish to invite the wider congregation). Choose a work space for building the solar ovens and a sunny location outside or a full-sun window where solar ovens and be set up.
- Ask participants ahead of time to bring a cardboard pizza box and newspapers with them to the workshop; tell them the congregation will provide the rest of the supplies (if this is not possible, ask participants to bring as many of the supplies as needed).
- Gather materials needed (you may wish to have extra cardboard pizza boxes and newspapers).
- Visit the [Solar Cookers International](#) (at [solarcookersinternational.org/](http://solarcookersinternational.org/)) website. Print information to share with participants.
- Recruit volunteers to take photographs or video during the event
- Set up tables and chairs, and set out materials so they are easily accessible.

## Description of Activity

This activity is a fun way to experience solar energy. Since this project takes more time than is usually available in a religious education session and extra adult help is needed, it is an ideal way to include families and the wider congregation.

Welcome participants and invite them to sit at the tables, making certain that there are mixed ages at each table. In these words of your own, explain:

The World of Wonder group has been exploring green energy—energy which comes from sources that are cleaner and less polluting than fossil fuels, and will last forever, such as sun, wind, and water. In today's workshop, we will use solar energy to create a treat.

Give a copy of Handout 2, Solar Oven Instructions, to all participants. Invite each table to introduce themselves to each other and follow the instructions to make a solar oven. Encourage discussion by asking:

What are some ways that you save energy or use green energy in your family?

When solar ovens are finished, invite participants to collect ingredients you have provided and have them use their solar ovens to cook the treat. While the treats are cooking, you may wish to share information about the not for profit organization Solar Cookers International, which spreads solar cooking awareness and skills worldwide, particularly in areas with plentiful sunshine and diminishing sources of cooking fuel. Since its founding in 1987, SCI has enabled over 30,000 families in Africa to cook with the sun's energy, freeing women and children from the burdens of gathering firewood and carrying it for miles.

When the treats have been eaten, ask all participants to help clean up.

Close by asking the World of Wonder children to lead participants in the song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

Share the photos or video of the activity with the children next time the group meets.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately after the session, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?

- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? What information or help do we need?
- How was the timing? How can sessions work better within our time frame?
- Is our program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we do differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

Question: How do energy conscious people think about wind power? Answer: They're blown away! — [United States Energy Information Administration](http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=riddles) (at [www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=riddles](http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=riddles))

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we explored "green" energy, that is, energy that comes from sources that are cleaner, make less pollution, and will last forever such as sun, wind, and water. We learned that most of the energy we use comes from burning fuels like coal, gas, or oil, which are resources the earth will run out of someday, so one important way we can care for the interdependent web is to save energy. We heard a story about wind energy and collaborative problem solving on the Danish island of Samso and made our own pinwheel wind turbines.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** ways your family can conserve energy at home, work, or school. Do the home energy audit [on the Earth Care Canada website](http://www.earthcarecanada.com/EarthCARE_Resources/home_energy_audit.asp) (at [www.earthcarecanada.com/EarthCARE\\_Resources/home\\_energy\\_audit.asp](http://www.earthcarecanada.com/EarthCARE_Resources/home_energy_audit.asp)) or explore ["365 Ways to Save Energy"](http://www.savewithces.com/365in2008.html) (at [www.savewithces.com/365in2008.html](http://www.savewithces.com/365in2008.html)) for more ideas. Do you have forms of green energy available to you? Are there ways you can develop cooperative partnerships concerning energy issues in the congregation, your child's school, or the local community? Find out if your state has an [Interfaith Power and Light](http://interfaithpowerandlight.org/) (at [interfaithpowerandlight.org/](http://interfaithpowerandlight.org/)) affiliate and meet some interfaith neighbors.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Learn...** how solar energy can change lives around the world. Find out more about [Solar Cookers International](http://solarcookersinternational.org/) (at [solarcookersinternational.org/](http://solarcookersinternational.org/)), a not for profit organization that "spreads solar cooking awareness and skills worldwide, particularly in areas with plentiful sunshine and diminishing sources of cooking fuel. Since its founding in 1987, SCI has enabled over 30,000 families in Africa to cook with the sun's energy, freeing women and children from the burdens of gathering



firewood and carrying it for miles." View the [inspiring video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-Fpsw_yYPg) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-Fpsw\\_yYPg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-Fpsw_yYPg)) "A Liter of Light." Discuss: [What other things can be accomplished with solar power](https://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/alertnets-top-20-big-ideas-that-dont-cost-the-earth/#A19) (at [www.trust.org/alertnet/news/alertnets-top-20-big-ideas-that-dont-cost-the-earth/#A19](https://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/alertnets-top-20-big-ideas-that-dont-cost-the-earth/#A19))?

**A Family Adventure.** Are there any wind turbines near where you live? Do you know anyone who has installed solar panels? Go see a green energy source in action.

**Family Discovery.** Try some of the experiments from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory [website](https://www.nrel.gov/education/educational_resources.html) (at [www.nrel.gov/education/educational\\_resources.html](https://www.nrel.gov/education/educational_resources.html)) or this [web page for kids](https://www.alliantenergykids.com/FunandGames/CoolProjects/index.htm) (at [www.alliantenergykids.com/FunandGames/CoolProjects/index.htm](https://www.alliantenergykids.com/FunandGames/CoolProjects/index.htm)) from Alliant Energy.

Note: The Faith in Action activity for this session is a workshop to make a solar oven. Volunteer to help!

**A Family Ritual.** Try an "Energy Sabbath. Each year, on a Saturday evening in March, the world observes Earth Hour, when everyone is to turn out the lights as a symbolic gesture promoting our need to conserve energy and lower our carbon footprint. On a regular basis, try observing your own Earth Hour or an Energy Sabbath. For an hour or a morning or evening or even a full day, turn everything off and enjoy reflective solitude or spend time in conversation with others or take time to relish nature.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.
- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.
2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.

Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: SOLAR ART (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Photo-sensitive paper, nature objects
- Water source

### Preparation for Activity

- Decide whether the children will gather nature objects as part of the activity; if not, gather the objects before the session.
- Note: This activity requires a sunny day!

### Description of Activity

Take the group outside and have the children collect nature objects like leaves, nuts, rocks, seedpods, twigs—anything that will block the sunlight. Or, have some objects ready for them to choose, such as shells, fern fronds, or flowers.

After they have selected an object to imprint, give each child a piece of photo-sensitive paper. Remind them to keep the photo paper covered until they are ready to set the nature object. Place the paper on the ground in the sun, remove the covering, and set the object on the paper. Most photo paper needs about two minutes for the imprint, but check the directions that come with your photo-sensitive paper. Tell each child when it is time to remove the object and rinse their paper in water to reveal and fix the image.

Have the participants share their sun prints with each other. Optional: Ask participants what other things can be done with solar power. Some ideas are making sun tea or making a solar oven (see Faith in Action activity.)

## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 13: STORY: GREEN LIKE THE WIND**

By Julie Simon.

In a bay of the North Sea, in the middle of Denmark, on an island called Samso, the wind blows and blows. On this windy island, lived a man named Soren Hermansen. He farmed some land and played guitar in a band, but mostly he thought about the planet. On the island also lived fishermen and dentists, shop keepers and ferry boat drivers, teachers and electricians, and of course children. The children loved to fly kites on the windy beach of the island.

The people of Samso were ordinary in many ways—especially when it came to thinking about and using energy. They drove cars that ran on gasoline. To power their lights, they used electricity carried by a big underground cable from the mainland. And during the long, cold nights of winter, they kept their homes toasty warm with oil brought to Samso by giant tankers. All of Samso's energy had to be made somewhere off the island.

Then one day, thinking about energy on Samso became extraordinary! The island was picked to be the energy demonstration project by the government of Denmark. From that day forward, Samso would work to use green energy and create all its energy right on the island—local energy—as much as possible.

Now Soren Hermansen, the man who thought a lot about the planet, knew making green energy locally would be less polluting for the island, Denmark, *and* the planet. He became Samso's champion for green energy. So he brought lots of people together to figure out greener ways to save energy and to make energy on their very own Island of Samso.

At first, many of the grownups on the island were not convinced it could be done. They thought green, locally-created energy would cost too much money. They thought it would take too much time out of their already

busy days. They thought it would just be too hard and too much trouble. What could they do on such a small island?

But Soren Hermansen did not give up. He knew his country had a long history of co-operative community projects. So he continued to get people together. He asked the children for ideas. He asked the grownups for ideas. He asked for big ideas and little ideas. What about riding bicycles instead of driving cars someone suggested? What about collecting energy from the sun? How about using all the wind that we have on the island?

After several years of thinking and talking, a few residents decided it was time to start doing. One person put up a small used wind turbine in the backyard to make electricity to use at home. Another invested money to build a huge wind turbine. Then he sold the wind-powered electricity to the power company who connected it to the homes on Samso. Finally, Samso had two green energy projects! The island residents still used plenty of polluting power from other places, but it was a good start.

Then one winter night, an icy storm shut off electricity on Samso. All the lights went out and everywhere was dark. Except the house with its own backyard wind turbine. It continued its "whoosh whoosh" throughout the storm. After that, a lot more people on Samso got serious about green energy sources from right on the island.

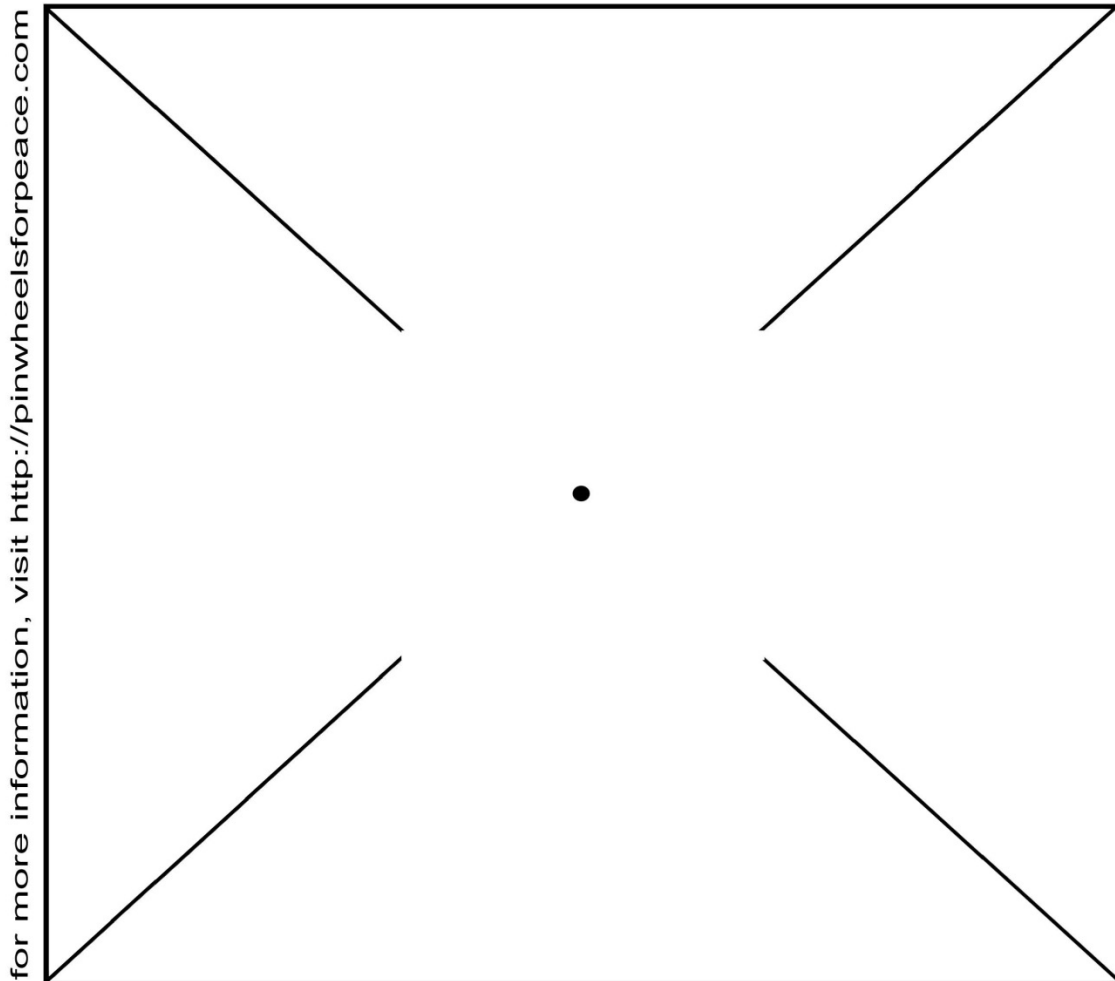
Some people installed solar panels on their farms. Someone built a biomass furnace to burn straw from the fields rather than oil. And someone invented a way to make tractor fuel from plants that grow on the island, instead of using gasoline. More and more people jumped in and figured out what they could do to contribute to green energy right on Samso. Many pooled their money to build more big wind turbines. Today, 20 wind turbines on the island and in the sea around it help power Samso and even send extra green energy back to the mainland of Denmark.



# WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 13:

## HANDOUT 1: PINWHEEL TEMPLATE AND INSTRUCTIONS

From the [Pinwheels for Peace website](http://pinwheelsforpeace.com), copyright 2005, Ayers and McMillan. Published with permission.



### What you need:

Scissors  
Straight pin  
Pencil with eraser  
Colored pencils or markers to decorate

## Pinwheels for Peace

### How to get started:

Cut out the pinwheel square on this page. On one side of the paper, write down your feelings about war/peace/tolerance/living in harmony. On the other side of the paper, use markers, colored pencils, paint, or other art media to visually express your feelings. Following the lines on the template, cut in from all four corners, leaving about 2 inches of center uncut.

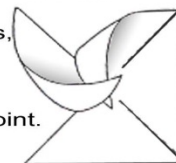
### To create the pinwheel:

Gently bend (don't fold) one of the cut corners to the center point. Skip the next cut corner, and bend the next one. Skip and bend until four points meet in the center. Then stick the straight pin through all four points AND the back of the pinwheel. Stick the pin into the pencil eraser. Find some wind to test it out.

Save your pinwheel in a safe place until September 21st (which is International Day of Peace) then take it to a public place and "plant" it into the ground to send a message of **world peace!**



Cut out this peace sign and put it in the center of your pinwheel before you put the pin in it.



## **WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 13:**

### **HANDOUT 2: SOLAR OVEN INSTRUCTIONS**

On the top of the pizza box, use a ruler and a marker to draw lines parallel to three sides of the box, 1-inch in from each edge. Use a box cutter or sharp scissors to cut along the three lines, to make a flap in the lid of a pizza box. Fold this flap up so it stands when the box lid is closed.

Cut aluminum foil to cover the inner side of the flap. Glue the aluminum foil to the inner side of the flap, shiny side out.

Use two sheets of clear plastic wrap to create an airtight window for sunlight to enter the box. Do this by opening the box and taping one sheet of plastic wrap across the inside of the opening you made when you cut the flap in the lid. Then, close the box and tape the second sheet of plastic wrap across the same opening, on the outside. Tape very securely, to seal out air.

Glue aluminum foil to the bottom of your box.

Cover the aluminum foil with black construction paper (black absorbs heat). The black surface is where your food will be set to cook.

Take the box outside to a sunny spot. Adjust the flap to get the most sunlight possible to reflect off the aluminum foil and onto the plastic-covered window. Use a ruler, stick or large straw to prop the flap where you want it. You can also tilt the box, by rolling a towel and placing it underneath the box. (Hint: You can preheat the oven as high as 200 degrees Fahrenheit by setting it in direct sunlight for 30 minutes.)

You can make toast of a buttered slice of bread, or melt cheese on bread, tortillas, or chips. You can cook a hot dog, make nachos, or cook s'mores. To keep the paper liner clean, place items on a clear plastic or glass plate (a pie plate works well). To remove food from the oven, lift the lid of the pizza box, and use oven mitts or potholders to lift the glass dish out.

**WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 13:**  
**LEADER RESOURCE 1: MURAL IMAGE — WIND TURBINE**



## FIND OUT MORE

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory has a publication for teachers called [Fun with Sun](http://www.nrel.gov/docs/gen/fy01/30928.pdf) (at [www.nrel.gov/docs/gen/fy01/30928.pdf](http://www.nrel.gov/docs/gen/fy01/30928.pdf)).

View the inspiring "[Liter of Light](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-Fpsw_yYPg)" (at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-Fpsw\\_yYPg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-Fpsw_yYPg)) video and see how a simple plastic soda bottle can change lives.

Find out more about [Solar Cookers International](http://solarcookersinternational.org/) (at [solarcookersinternational.org/](http://solarcookersinternational.org/)), a not for profit organization that "spreads solar cooking awareness and skills worldwide, particularly in areas with plentiful sunshine and diminishing sources of cooking fuel."

Find out if your state has an [Interfaith Power and Light](http://interfaithpowerandlight.org/) (at [interfaithpowerandlight.org/](http://interfaithpowerandlight.org/)) affiliate.

Visit the websites of the [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) and [The Green Sanctuary Program](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) to learn how Unitarian Universalists are involved in taking care of the earth.

# SESSION 14: ENOUGH STUFF

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*People overestimate the pleasure they'll get from having more stuff. This does not apply to new rose bushes, crayons, or yarn stashes. — Dr. Sun Wolf*

This session helps children identify the difference between need and want and introduces relevant actions that make a difference in caring for the web of life. While some participants may be familiar with the 3 Rs (Reduce, Re-use, and Recycle), this session introduces another R, Refuse, which is demonstrated in the central story about a very fun "no presents" birthday party. The 5th R is Rot (decomposition), explored in Session 7.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Foster an environmentalist ethic for refusing, in addition to reducing, reusing, and recycling
- Explore the difference between needs and wants
- Empower participants as leaders
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Consider a "no presents" birthday party, by responding to a real-life story
- Understand the 5 Rs: refuse, reduce, re-use, recycle, and rot
- Make use of recycled materials in a creative project
- Perform leadership roles.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — Enough Stuff	10
Activity 3: Recycle Relay	15
Activity 4: Birthday Brainstorm	10
Activity 5: Toilet Paper Roll Binoculars	10
Faith in Action: Enough Stuff Birthday Party	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: "Needs" vs. "Wants" Nature Walk	20
Alternate Activity 3: Kids Make a Difference Video	15

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for several minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. Take a few minutes to ponder what it would mean in your life to live with simple abundance.

Consider this session's opening quote:

*People overestimate the pleasure they'll get from having more stuff. This does not apply to new rose bushes, crayons, or yarn stashes. — Dr. Sun Wolf*

What would your three exceptions be?

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you have "enough stuff?"
- Are there any items you genuinely need which you do not have?
- Do you practice the 5 Rs— Refuse/Reduce/Reuses/Recycle/Rot? How might you practice them more, or begin to practice them?

Allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

—adapted from words by Alice Anacheka-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we're going to talk about "stuff" and things we can do when we have too much stuff. Do you know what recycle means? How many of you recycle at home? Can you recycle everything? There are some more "R" words that can help us care for the interdependent web, words like Refuse, Reduce, and Re-use. We can try to do all of these before we recycle something.

[Optional... ]

There's one more that we've already talked about. Rot. Maybe you were here when we talked about rot and decomposition.

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a very wide span in terms of reading abilities; point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each

other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — ENOUGH STUFF (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Enough Stuff](#)" (included in this document)
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as a piece of old clothing (maybe something outgrown), a broken toy, a picture of a cluttered room
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Read the story questions and choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: Provide a basket of soft, quiet, manipulable items for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where is the Fidget Basket is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1,

Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Take the chime or rain stick from the basket and say in these words or your own:

Each time you hear a story during World of Wonder we will use this instrument to get our ears, minds, and bodies ready to listen. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. When I sound the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can and see how long you can hear it. When you can't hear it anymore, open your eyes and it will be time for the story to start.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, read or tell the story, "Enough Stuff."

When the story is finished, lead a brief discussion using questions such as:

- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- Have you ever thought you had enough stuff? More than enough stuff?
- Which of the 5 Rs— Refuse/Reduce/Reuses/Recycle/Rot — did you hear in the story?
- Can you think of a time when you refused, reduced, or re-used something?
- How can we as Unitarian Universalists help reduce how much stuff we use and increase what we refuse?

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.



## ACTIVITY 3: RECYCLE RELAY (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Two sets of four recycle bins (or cardboard boxes or other containers), two boxes or barrels for trash, and two bins for unsorted items
- 10-15 clean items (per team) that go in either recycle or trash bins, such as aluminum drink cans, toilet paper rolls, printer paper, newspaper, plastic bottles, yogurt containers, juice boxes, and sandwich baggies—at least 2 items that go into each of the different bins
- Labels for the recycle bins: Aluminum (a drink can), Paper (a piece of newspaper), Plastic (a plastic water bottle), Glass (a glass jar), and a label for Trash (an empty juice box)
- Optional: Add a Compost bin. Items for the compost bin might include fresh orange peels; wood or plastic fruit, veggies, bread, or eggs; or drawings of produce

### Preparation for Activity

- Designate a large, open area, preferably outdoors, for the relay race.
- Review the activity so you understand the instructions and can explain them to the children.
- Give each team 10-15 (enough for each child to have at least one turn) clean items that go in either recycle or trash bins. Make sure each team has at least 2 items that go into each of the different boxes. For the compost bin, you can use fresh orange peels, cut-off carrot tops, or wood or plastic fruit or vegetables. Place the items in a single, unsorted bin for each team.
- Place the unsorted bins at the "start" line. At the "finish" line, place two sets of 5 recycle bins (or cardboard boxes or other containers) for recycling and trash in a line with plenty of space between them. Label each with words and a picture: Aluminum (a drink can), Paper (a piece of newspaper), Plastic (a plastic water bottle), Glass (a glass jar), and Trash (a juice box).
- Optional: Add a Compost bin, or use it instead of the Glass bin.

### Description of Activity

This activity familiarizes children with items that can be recycled and how to recycle them. The relay can be done inside, with sufficient space for the number of children you have.

Form two teams. If the numbers are uneven, have a volunteer from one team run an extra recycle round.

Have the teams race to get all their items into the correct bins. Start with one child from each team who picks up one item out of the unsorted bin, runs and places the item in the correct bin, and then tags the next person on their team who then takes their turn. Continue until all the items are sorted.

### Variation

Have all the children on one team. Have them race the clock and try to beat their group time by doing the recycle relay several times.

At the end of each round, review the items in the bins. If there is a question about what goes into a bin, ask the team to explain why they thought the item belonged in the bin it went in. If needed, adjust the final place it goes.

### Including All Participants

If any participants cannot race, use the alternative method and assign a timekeeper.

## ACTIVITY 4: BIRTHDAY BRAINSTORM (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Handout 1, [Birthday Party Resources](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Talking stick

### Preparation for Activity

- Explore the resources on Handout 1. Gather some suggestions you can share with the children during this activity.
- Copy Handout 1 for each participant.
- Arrange for a co-leader to write responses on the newsprint.
- Optional: Visit the "[Birthdays Without Pressure](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/default.asp)" (at [www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/default.asp](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/default.asp)) website.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle, outdoors if possible, and ask them to think about the parties from the story "Enough Stuff." Go around the circle (or use the talking stick) and ask questions such as:

- What one thing do you remember most?
- Would you have enjoyed the party?

- Were there ways that the parties included any of the "R" words: Refuse—Reduce—Reuse—Recycle? [Prompt for details such as the cannonballs were made from recycled newspaper, the pirate ships from recycled refrigerator boxes.]

Now, ask participants to close their eyes and imagine a "no presents" birthday party they might like to have. Would it have a theme (such as pirates)? Where would it be? What games would they play? Are there ways they could include any of the Rs?

As time allows, have each person share their ideas and have a co-leader record them on newsprint. Contribute ideas, as needed, from the resources on Handout 1. Conclude the brainstorming by distributing Handout 1. Invite children to share it with their parents at home to help their families talk about new ways to celebrate birthdays.

Note: You might continue the conversation during the next activity while the children make the binoculars. Optional: List everyone's birthday on newsprint, then sing a round of "Happy Birthday to Us."

## ACTIVITY 5: TOILET PAPER ROLL BINOCULARS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Clean, used toilet paper rolls
- Construction paper, markers or crayons, tape and glue sticks
- A stapler and a single hole punch (for adult use)
- Yarn and scissors, including left-handed scissors

### Preparation for Activity

- In advance, ask families to save toilet paper rolls. Gather enough for each child to have two, plus a few extra for newcomers.
- Place materials on work tables.

### Description of Activity

Give each child two toilet paper rolls. They can cover them with construction paper, decorate them with markers, or leave them plain. Help them staple the two rolls together, punch a hole on each of the outside walls of the tubes, and cut a length of yarn and tie to make a strap. Now they have binoculars for bird-watching or spying.

Say, in these words or your own:

This was a very easy project to make from recycled toilet paper rolls. Can you think of other

projects that would be fun to make at a birthday party?

Add ideas to the newsprint list from Activity 4, Birthday Brainstorm.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder mural from Session 1
- Leader Resource 1, [Mural Image — Too Much Stuff](#) (included in this document) , and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- 

### Preparation for Activity

- Print Leader Resource 1, Too Much Stuff, preferably in color.
- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy as a handout for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

### Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say, in these words or your own:

Today we learned about the 5 Rs: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot, and how important these actions are in caring for the earth each and every day. Unitarian Universalists believe that all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like our World of Wonder mural. Each time we meet we add something new to our mural. Today we add a picture of "too much stuff," to remind us to practice the 5 Rs and be satisfied with "enough stuff."

Attach the picture to the mural.

Indicate the lyrics to the closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

# FAITH IN ACTION: ENOUGH STUFF BIRTHDAY PARTY

## Materials for Activity

- Birthday cakes (brought in by participants, at least 12, one for each month of the year)
- Tables and chairs
- Cake plates and forks (preferably to be washed after the event and not disposed of)
- Newsprint with responses from Activity 4 and 5
- Handout 1, [Birthday Party Resources](#) (included in this document)
- Closing Song poster from Session 1 (see Session 1, Leader Resource 4)
- Optional: A copy of the story, "Enough Stuff" from Activity 2
- Optional: list of "famous" UU birthdays by month
- Optional: DVD player
- Optional: "Parenting Wisely In A Too Much Of Everything World" DVD

## Preparation for Activity

- Consult with the director of religious education to choose a date and time for the workshop and communicate to families (you may wish to invite the wider congregation as well to promote multigenerational community).
- Be sure the group will include a mix of ages. Plan on 12 mixed age groups, one for each birth month. Recruit one adult per birthday month table to serve as small group facilitator.
- Decide if you wish to extend the "birthday party" by screening a copy of "Parenting Wisely in a Too Much of Everything World" by Unitarian Universalist [Dr. Bill Doherty](#) (at [www.uua.org/ga/past/2007/choicesthat/30945.shtml](http://www.uua.org/ga/past/2007/choicesthat/30945.shtml)), which you can order on DVD from the Action Steps section of the ["Birthdays without Pressure" website](#) (at [www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/action.asp](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/action.asp)).
- If showing the parent video, recruit volunteers to lead games with the children.
- Solicit volunteers to bring birthday cakes and encourage parents to bake with their children for the event. Ask for cakes to be as "green" as possible: Encourage the use of fair trade and organic ingredients, use eggs from free range hens, include vegan options (made with no animal products). Ask bakers not to use any

nuts as ingredients, and to prepare a card listing the ingredients they do include.

- Recruit volunteers to take photographs or video during the event
- Copy Handout 1 for all participants.
- Set up tables and chairs and label each table with a month.
- Place a birthday cake at each table, labeled with the baker's name, along with plates and forks.
- Optional: Ask for volunteers to create a list by month of "famous" UU birthdays.
- Optional: Review websites listed on Handout 1, Birthday Resources.

## Description of Activity

A multigenerational group shares alternative birthday party ideas.

Invite participants of all ages to move to the table set up for the month of their birthday. Have each table introduce themselves to each other and give their birthday; see if anyone shares a birthday. Optional: have a list of "Famous" Unitarian Universalists with birthday in that month.

After a few minutes of conversation, introduce the World of Wonder program. Then, tell or read the story, "Enough Stuff." Share the ideas the group recorded on newsprint in Activities 4 and 5 and ask that tables talk about birthdays parties they have had, attended, or would like to attend that have an element of any of the 5 Rs: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot. Ask the volunteer facilitator to jot down ideas to add to the newsprint.

After ten or fifteen minutes of discussion, start the party by asking those who have baked cakes to briefly describe the cake they brought (ingredients, etc.) and on which table it is. Ask everyone to rise in body or spirit and join in singing "Happy Birthday to Us." Invite everyone to have a piece of birthday cake at their own table or at another if they prefer a different flavor.

Optional: Extend the event by showing the DVD to adults while the children engage in games or activities that have been suggested by participants—at this gathering, or at another time.

When the cakes have been eaten, ask all participants to help clean up.

Close by asking the World of Wonder children to lead participants in the song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

Share the photos or video with the children, next time the group meets.

## Including All Participants

Make space at work tables to accommodate people who use wheelchairs.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately after the session, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? What information or help do we need?
- How was the timing? How can sessions work better within our time frame?
- Is our program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we do differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

People overestimate the pleasure they'll get from having more stuff. This does not apply to new rose bushes, crayons, or yarn stashes. — Dr. Sun Wolf

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we learned about the 5 Rs: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot. We heard the story "Enough Stuff," which introduced the idea of a no-presents birthday party—a concrete way to live the first R, "Refuse." We did a Recycle Relay, imagined a birthday party we might want to have, and made binoculars from recycled materials (a great idea for a birthday party activity!).

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER.** Talk about... what is "enough stuff?" How does your family celebrate birthdays? What changes could you make? What about a "no-presents" birthday party? Check out "[Birthdays without Pressure](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/children.asp)" (at [www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/children.asp](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/children.asp)) on the website of the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Nebraska for family discussion questions and more.

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER...** Take a tour of your home to look for evidence of the 5 Rs. Talk about ways to include more of these practices in your everyday lives at home, school, or work. Look at the blog [Zero Waste Home](http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com/p/tips.html) (at [zerowastehome.blogspot.com/p/tips.html](http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com/p/tips.html)). Is this something your family might try?

**A Family Adventure.** Invite your neighbors to participate and host a community "swap," perhaps at your congregation. Learn about communities that have done this on the [Give Your Stuff Away website](http://giveyourstuffaway.com/) (at [giveyourstuffaway.com/](http://giveyourstuffaway.com/)) or from The Center for a New American Dream's "[Guide to Sharing](http://www.newdream.org/)" (at [www.newdream.org/](http://www.newdream.org/))."

**Family Discovery.** Explore the website "[Loop Scoops](http://www.storyofstuff.org/2011/09/14/free-learning-resources-for-all-ages/)" (at [www.storyofstuff.org/2011/09/14/free-learning-resources-for-all-ages/](http://www.storyofstuff.org/2011/09/14/free-learning-resources-for-all-ages/)), a project of PBS kids by Annie Leonard, the author of Story of Stuff. Or go to [The Story of Stuff](http://www.storyofstuff.org/) (at [www.storyofstuff.org/](http://www.storyofstuff.org/)) website and watch the movie and look at the resources for more ideas.

**A Family Game.** Talk with your child about special things you can do together that do not require any material items. Play games like tag, hide-and-go-seek; and duck, duck, goose. Point out that these games are simple in that they do not require any special equipment and "green" in that they do not use any of the Earth's resources.

**A Family Ritual.** Our lives can be very complex. Try a family meditation practice to simplify your days: Gather together for a brief time. Light a candle. If you have a chime or singing bowl, use it and listen together to see how long you can hear the sound. Put on some music with nature sounds or simply sit quietly together. At first, meditate for only a brief period of time, about 1-2 minutes. As time goes on, lengthen that time based on your family's readiness.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.
- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.
2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.

Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: "NEEDS" VS. "WANTS" NATURE WALK (20 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Lunch-sized paper bags, cloth bags, or small baggies to collect interesting items along the way, one per child
- Optional: Flashlights, magnifying glasses, or handheld dental mirrors

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Communicate with parents in advance and inform them of your plan to spend time outdoors. Arrange all necessary details, such as transportation, permission slips, sunscreen, insect repellent, and appropriate clothing.
- Select an appropriate location for your nature walk in consultation with the religious educator and/or minister.
- Learn to recognize poison ivy and learn about any venomous or otherwise dangerous creatures in your local habitat and how to avoid them.

- Determine whether anyone is allergic to bee stings, pollen or other outdoor allergens and plan accordingly.

### **Description of Activity**

Participants experience nature directly.

Go on a nature walk with a focus on needs versus wants. As you walk, notice and count the different varieties of plants and animals that you encounter. Invite participants to place any interesting non-living items they find in their paper bags, such as acorns, stones, or leaves. As you see a new species, ask the participants to consider what that living being needs in order to survive. Point out that generally speaking, animals and plants do not take more than they need from nature.

When you have completed your walk, process the activity with questions like:

- I wonder what would happen if one of the species we saw (provide an example) started taking everything it could find.
- I wonder if the species we saw (provide an example) could talk to us, what it would say.
- I wonder how people can help the living beings we saw today.
- Unitarian Universalists believe everything is connected in an interdependent web of all existence. I wonder what you noticed today about the web of life.

### **Including All Participants**

Be sure to determine whether there are any relevant allergies within your group, such as bee stings or pollen, and plan accordingly.

If any child uses a wheelchair or has limited mobility, select a location that is accessible, with paved paths.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: KIDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE VIDEO (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Computer with Internet access and a large monitor or a digital projector

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Test equipment. Preview videos you plan to show the group. Set up monitor or projector/screen so all participants can view the video.

## Description of Activity

View a [YouTube video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=PIQUcDt1dhE) (at [www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=PIQUcDt1dhE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=PIQUcDt1dhE)) (5:19) about Cole Rasenberger, an eight-year-old who protested fast food chains' wasteful packaging. Find more stories; see the Treehugger website piece, "[Six Child Environmentalists That Have Already Changed the World](https://www.treehugger.com/culture/6-child-environmentalists-that-have-already-changed-the-world.html)" (at [www.treehugger.com/culture/6-child-environmentalists-that-have-already-changed-the-world.html](https://www.treehugger.com/culture/6-child-environmentalists-that-have-already-changed-the-world.html)).

If you have time, navigate to [the Barron Prize website](http://www.barronprize.org/) (at [www.barronprize.org/](http://www.barronprize.org/)). The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes, founded by author T. A. Barron in honor of his mother, celebrates outstanding young leaders. Each year the Barron Prize honors 25 inspiring young people who have made a significant positive difference to people and our planet.



## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 14: STORY: ENOUGH STUFF

By Julie Simon.

Jamie sat on his bed, while his Dad talked on the phone. In just three weeks, Jamie was going to turn seven. He couldn't wait. He was having a pirate party. He already had his costume: his ripped white T-shirt, some torn black pants that his Mom had cut jaggedly at the knee, a black eye patch, and the colorful stuffed parrot that he sometimes slept with.

Jamie loved birthdays. He loved being the center of attention, eating pizza, having his grandparents come over—his Grandma Delia made the best chocolate cake in the world. But most of all, he couldn't wait for his friends to come over so they could run around in the backyard and play in the pirate ships he and his Dad were making. Yesterday, their neighbor Cameron had told them about a refrigerator box sitting by the side of the road a few blocks away from their house. But Jamie wanted to make at least two ships and maybe have a cannonball fight. Jamie's Dad hung up the phone.

"Well, there is still one empty refrigerator box that they haven't broken down at Montgomery's Appliance store over on Fennbridge Road. That's just a mile away. I told the owner we would pick it up by noon."

"Yippee! Can we go get it now? Then we can make two ships to use for a cannonball battle at the party."

"Whoa, kiddo. How about after some breakfast? Then we'll have energy to work on making the ships once we get the box home. Now what were you going to use for cannonballs?"

"Well, I thought newspaper rolled into balls would work. They won't hurt us and we have a lot of newspaper in the living room."

Jamie's dad laughed. "We do have plenty of newspaper. I guess it's time I put some of those piles out with the recycling. But I'll set aside some for making cannonballs and then we can recycle it after the birthday party."

Just then, Jamie's mom walked into the room. "Speaking of birthdays...What do you want for your birthday?" she asked. Jamie looked around his bedroom. He spotted

plastic Legos, wood and cardboard blocks, toy trucks and cars, two stuffed bears, a stuffed monkey, fish, and the parrot; a magnetic building set, his wooden train set, a magic kit, and about 10 books piled next to his bed. And that was just the stuff sitting out on the floor.

Then he said, "I don't know, Mommy. I do have lots of toys and books already. Can I think about it?"

"Of course," said his mom. "But if you want something special, let us know soon. Now how about helping me work on the party invitations while Daddy makes us some eggs? I'm getting hungry."

Jamie grabbed his polar bear from his bed and went into the study to help his mom write the invitations.

"You know, Jamie," said his mom. "We could make it a 'no presents' birthday this year if you want. Instead of bringing presents for you, you could ask your friends to donate items for an animal shelter or another charity you like."

Jamie looked at his mom. He had actually been to a "no presents" birthday. His cousin Kai who had turned 10 last August had a tropical pool party. And there were no presents. Instead, everyone had brought donations—whatever they wanted—to help save the rainforest.

But the party was a blast. They swam at the neighborhood pool, and had crazy hat relay races in the pool and dove for coins in the deep end. Jamie was on his neighborhood swim team so he could swim and dive with Kai and all his older friends. They ate mangos, pineapple, and coconuts, which Jamie loved. Kai told Jamie it was the best birthday ever, and he felt great sending a check for \$200 to the Save the Rainforest Fund.

"Mommy," said Jamie. "I think a 'no presents' birthday would be good. Maybe we could have everyone donate money if they want to. Do you think we could find someone who is helping polar bears and give the money to them?"

"I bet we could," said his Mom. "We'll spend a little time researching that. How about we start with a wildlife group like World Wildlife Fund?"

"Yes," said Jamie. He hugged his polar bear. "I'd like to help the polar bears. I have enough stuff."



## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 14:

### HANDOUT 1: BIRTHDAY PARTY RESOURCES

[Birthdays Without Pressure](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/default.asp) (at [www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/default.asp](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/birthdays/default.asp))

[De-Pressurizing Birthdays \(Center for New American Dream\)](http://www.newdream.org/programs/beyond-consumerism/kids-and-commercialism/resources-for-parents) (at [www.newdream.org/programs/beyond-consumerism/kids-and-commercialism/resources-for-parents](http://www.newdream.org/programs/beyond-consumerism/kids-and-commercialism/resources-for-parents))

[Zero Waste Home](http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com/2011/02/presenting-my-son-max.html) (at [zerowastehome.blogspot.com/2011/02/presenting-my-son-max.html](http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com/2011/02/presenting-my-son-max.html))

[The No-Presents Birthday Party](http://www.smilepolitely.com/opinion/the_no-presents_birthday_party/) (at [www.smilepolitely.com/opinion/the\\_no-presents\\_birthday\\_party/](http://www.smilepolitely.com/opinion/the_no-presents_birthday_party/))

[Unplug Your Kids](http://unplugyourkids.com/?s=birthday+party&x=0&y=0) (at [unplugyourkids.com/?s=birthday+party&x=0&y=0](http://unplugyourkids.com/?s=birthday+party&x=0&y=0))

[What is a No-Gift Birthday party?](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-no-gift-birthday-party.htm) (at [www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-no-gift-birthday-party.htm](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-no-gift-birthday-party.htm))

[Cake, But No Presents Please](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/27/nyregion/27gifts.html?pagewanted=all) (at [www.nytimes.com/2007/07/27/nyregion/27gifts.html?pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/27/nyregion/27gifts.html?pagewanted=all))

#### Related

[The Story of Stuff](http://www.storyofstuff.org/) (at [www.storyofstuff.org/](http://www.storyofstuff.org/)) and [Loop Scoops](http://planetsave.com/2010/10/18/loop-scoops-story-of-stuff-founder-annie-leonard-teams-up-with-pbs-kids-wghb-videos/) (at [planetsave.com/2010/10/18/loop-scoops-story-of-stuff-founder-annie-leonard-teams-up-with-pbs-kids-wghb-videos/](http://planetsave.com/2010/10/18/loop-scoops-story-of-stuff-founder-annie-leonard-teams-up-with-pbs-kids-wghb-videos/))

[Respite from Holiday-Hoopla](http://blog.nwf.org/2010/12/nature-gives-the-family-respite-during-holiday-hoopla/) (at [blog.nwf.org/2010/12/nature-gives-the-family-respite-during-holiday-hoopla/](http://blog.nwf.org/2010/12/nature-gives-the-family-respite-during-holiday-hoopla/))

[Unplug the Christmas Machine](http://www.amazon.com/Unplug-Christmas-Machine-Complete-Putting/dp/0688109616) (at [www.amazon.com/Unplug-Christmas-Machine-Complete-Putting/dp/0688109616](http://www.amazon.com/Unplug-Christmas-Machine-Complete-Putting/dp/0688109616))

[Four Things Children Really Want for Christmas](http://www.getrichslowly.org/blog/2007/12/21/the-four-things-children-really-want-for-christmas/) (at [www.getrichslowly.org/blog/2007/12/21/the-four-things-children-really-want-for-christmas/](http://www.getrichslowly.org/blog/2007/12/21/the-four-things-children-really-want-for-christmas/))

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 14: LEADER RESOURCE 1: MURAL IMAGE — TOO MUCH STUFF

"Bedroom Mess" from [iStockphoto](https://www.iStockphoto.com).



## FIND OUT MORE

Read about [Freecycle](http://www.freecycle.org/about/background) (at [www.freecycle.org/about/background](http://www.freecycle.org/about/background)) and find out how to participate locally.

Enjoy a video of [Delbert McClinton singing his song "Too Much Stuff."](http://www.elyrics.net/inc/vidplay.php) (at [www.elyrics.net/inc/vidplay.php](http://www.elyrics.net/inc/vidplay.php))

Visit the websites of [Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/) (at [www.uuministryforearth.org/](http://www.uuministryforearth.org/)) and [The Green Sanctuary Program](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml)) to learn how Unitarian Universalists are involved in taking care of the earth:

# SESSION 15: WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*It's the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees... We can work together for a better world with men and women of goodwill, those who radiate the intrinsic goodness of humankind. — Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner and founder of the Greenbelt Movement*

Throughout this program, children have explored the wonder of the interdependent web of all existence and their place in that web; they have seen that their individual actions have an impact. In this session, children learn the power of working together cooperatively to make a difference by hearing about the Green Sanctuary Program of the Unitarian Universalist Association. They hear the story of how the First Unitarian Church in St. Louis engaged people of all ages to make a difference in their congregation and in the community.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Foster an ethic of responsibility to take action to nurture and protect the web of life
- Engage participants in cooperative activities and demonstrate the power of working cooperatively with others
- Introduce the UUA's Green Sanctuary program
- Empower participants as leaders in the group
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn what cooperation means, as they play a cooperative game, practice cooperative storytelling, and consider a story about how all ages in a congregation worked together to care for the earth
- Be inspired to "make a difference" by taking individual and collective action to promote the health and well-being of the interdependent web

- Hear how Unitarian Universalists cooperate to help the interdependent web through the UUA Green Sanctuary program
- Perform leadership roles.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Name Game	5
Activity 2: Story — Growing Green	10
Activity 3: Cooperative Storytelling	10
Activity 4: The Whole World on Our Heads	5
Activity 5: The Whole World with Our Hands	15
Faith in Action: Starting a Nature Club	
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Welcoming Web Game	10
Alternate Activity 2: Green Sanctuary Tour	20
Alternate Activity 3: Community Puzzle	15

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for several minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. Read the quote from Wangari Maathai:

*It's the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees... We can work together for a better world with men and women of goodwill, those who radiate the intrinsic goodness of humankind. — Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner and founder of the Greenbelt Movement*

Then, reflect:

- What is "your little thing?"
- How do you encourage others to work with you? How could you do this more?
- Do you know someone who "radiates the intrinsic goodness of humankind?" What is it like to work with someone like that?

- Has there been a time in your life when you were the person "radiating?"
- Consider the children in the World of Wonder group. How do we nurture each of them to be someone who radiates goodness?

Allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, and awe to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world.

—adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today we are going to talk about working together cooperatively to care for the interdependent web. What does it mean to cooperate? (take responses) Cooperation is working together with other people to get something done. And it's not just working together, but playing together too. Have you ever played cooperative games? We'll try that today. Taking care of the interdependent web is hard work that can't be done by just one person — so learning to work with others is a very important thing to know how to do.

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a very wide span in terms of reading abilities; point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL NAME GAME (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders.

Stand in a circle with participants. Say, in these words or your own:

One important way to make connections and help everyone feel welcome is to know each other's names. We will use this earth ball each time we are together to help create connections in our group. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the ball and say your name.



Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Welcome, [co-leader's name]." Then, that person will gently throw the ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be welcomed by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been introduced.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: STORY — GROWING GREEN (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Story, "[Growing Green](#)" (included in this document) "
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story such as an apple, packet of seeds, garden tools, and a compost bin with compostable scraps
- A chime or rain stick
- Optional: Sharp knife to cut the apple
- Optional: Fidget Basket (Session 1, Leader Resource 1)

### Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime or rain stick in the story basket and place the filled basket in the storytelling area.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props. Decide if you will slice the apple at the start of the story.
- Read the story questions and choose ones that will best help these children interpret the story and relate it to their own lives.
- Optional, but highly recommended: provide a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Session 1, Leader Resource 1, Fidget Basket, for a full description of a fidget basket and guidance for using it.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like:

This is our story basket. I wonder what is in it today?

Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile or cannot easily be passed around can be held up for all to see and then placed on the altar/centering table or any table or shelf.

Sound the chime or rain stick. When the sound has completely disappeared, tell or read the story, "Growing Green," which introduces the Green Sanctuary program and how one congregation, the First Unitarian Church of St Louis, engaged all ages in working together.

- When the story is finished, guide the children in a brief discussion using questions such as:
- What did you wonder about the story?
- What did you like most about the story?
- In what ways did the people in the St. Louis congregation cooperate?
- How did the congregation include people of all ages—kids, teenagers and grown-ups? Do you think anyone felt left out?
- I wonder if you remember what the 5 R's are (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot). Which one did we hear about in this story? (rot — compost bin)
- What did the people in St. Louis do with some of the food from the garden? [Donated to the food pantry, prepared meals for others/]
- How can people of all ages in this congregation work cooperatively to care for the earth?

### Including All Participants

Fidget objects, described in Session 1, Leader Resource 1, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for anyone who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

## ACTIVITY 3: COOPERATIVE STORYTELLING (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A notebook and pencil/pen (for adult use)

### Preparation for Activity

- Be prepared with story suggestions.
- Designate a space for a large circle, preferably outdoors.



### Description of Activity

Tell the children they will create a story together, one sentence at a time. One player starts and each child adds a sentence until everyone has had a turn and the story feels complete. This activity can be done over and over to create many stories.

If you are doing this activity outdoors, suggest that the children create a story about the nature they see around them.

### Including All Participants

Be sure everyone has a chance to participate, especially those who are quieter.

## ACTIVITY 4: THE WHOLE WORLD ON OUR HEADS (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth balls or beach balls, as many as possible

### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth balls or beach balls.
- Designate a large enough space for pairs or groups to work together, preferably outdoors.

### Description of Activity

This activity addresses active children. It can be done in pairs if you have enough plastic earth balls or beach balls for each pair. Or, it can be done in small groups. The object is for pairs or groups to get the ball from the ground to their heads without using their hands.

## ACTIVITY 5: THE WHOLE WORLD WITH OUR HANDS (15 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Leader Resource 1, [Handprint Garden Mural](#) (included in this document)
- Washable poster paint in rainbow colors
- A large roll of mural paper
- Shallow plates for each color of paint
- Several large paintbrushes (for stems)
- Optional: Smocks or old tee shirts
- Optional: Digital camera and printer
- Optional: Scissors and glue

### Preparation for Activity

- Let families know ahead of time that children will be painting with their hands.

- Designate an area for the mural paper that all participants can access, preferably outdoors. Tape the mural paper to a level surface where it will be okay if some paint is spilled.
- Pour paint on plates, one color per plate, and place the plates near the mural paper, where children can reach.
- Designate a hand-washing area.
- Optional: Recruit art-loving adult volunteers.
- Optional: if you are using a digital camera for faces, also take pictures of the process.

### Description of Activity

Using Leader Resource 1, Handprint Garden Mural, as a guide, tell the children they will work cooperatively to paint a garden mural using only their hands (mostly). Each person will make a flower representing themselves, using a brush to make only the stem, and using their own hand dipped in paint to make the blossom part of their flower. When the flowers are done, direct the children to use their paint-dipped hands to complete the picture with handprint grass, sky, and sun.

Leave time for everyone to wash their hands.

### Variation

Take a digital photo of each participant's face, then print and cut out the face and glue it in the center of that child's handprint flower.

### Including All Participants

Position the mural paper also everyone can reach and decorate it.

## CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- World of Wonder mural from Session 1
- Handprint Garden mural from Activity 5, and tape
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)

### Preparation for Activity

- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy as a handout for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

## Description of Activity

Gather in a circle by the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

Today we talked about the importance of working together cooperatively to care for the earth. Unitarian Universalists believe that all people and animals and plants are part of an invisible web of life, like our World of Wonder mural. Each time we meet we add something new to our mural, but today we worked cooperatively to create this mural, which we'll hang next to the other one.

Display the Handprint Garden mural adjacent to the World of Wonder mural.

Point to the lyrics to the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."

Invite the Song Leader to start the song with accompanying hand motions. Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and invite them to return next time.

## FAITH IN ACTION: STARTING A NATURE CLUB

### Materials for Activity

- Information about starting a nature club

### Preparation for Activity

- Recruit a small group to plan the gathering and consult with the religious educator to select a day and time for the gathering.
- Invite World of Wonder families to attend. Optional: Invite any families in the congregation or the local community.
- Download the [Nature Club for Families toolkit](http://www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/NCFF_toolkit.pdf) (at [www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/NCFF\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/NCFF_toolkit.pdf)) from the Children and Nature Network. Optional: Research and download pertinent information from other organizations such as [Planet Earth Scouts](http://planetearthscouts.org/) (at [planetearthscouts.org/](http://planetearthscouts.org/)) or [Kids for Earth](http://kidsforearth.org/) (at [earthscouts.net/Page/Home.asp](http://earthscouts.net/Page/Home.asp)). Print materials and create a package to share with participants' families and any broader audience you have decided to invite.

## Description of Activity

Hold a family gathering to assess and support interest in forming a Family Nature Club. The free, downloadable toolkit from the Children and Nature Network describes many options. You might wish to make this initial gathering a nature activity such as a family hike or an

outing to a local park. Or, plan for the families to share a meal together.

If there does not seem to be sufficient interest in forming a club, there may be interest in an occasional event. Consider planning outings based on the changing seasons. If your congregation has members who are pagan or involved with another earth-based religious tradition, collaborate on creating a multigenerational celebration of the earth. Or, plan an event such as a night hike based on a book about nature such as *When the Moon Is Full: A Lunar Year* by Mary Azarian or *The Night Tree* by Eve Bunting. You could invite families to bring their favorite nature-related book to share.

Whether or not this gathering launches a nature club, at the very least it offers intentional time for families to share nature together.

### Including All Participants

When selecting activities, be mindful about being inclusive of all.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately after the session, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included next time?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future? What information or help do we need?
- How was the timing? How can sessions work better within our time frame?
- Is our program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we do differently?
- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

It's the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees... We can work together for a better world with men and women of goodwill, those who radiate the intrinsic goodness of humankind. —

Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner and founder of the Greenbelt Movement

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we talked about working together cooperatively to care for the interdependent web. We heard a story about the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis and how people of all ages are engaged in projects to become a "Green Sanctuary." We played cooperative games and created a handprint garden mural together.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about...** times when your family has worked cooperatively with others. A project at school? At your congregation? In the wider community? Are there interfaith partnerships in your area?

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER.** The people at First Unitarian in St. Louis shared the bounty of their garden with a local food pantry and also served meals there. Organize a neighborhood food drive for a local organization. Sign up to prepare and serve a meal at a local homeless shelter.

**A Family Adventure.** Create your own handprint family garden mural or other cooperative project. Invite friends or neighbors to join you.

**Family Discovery.** Find out more about the UUA's [Green Sanctuary program](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml) (at [www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/index.shtml)). Is your congregation participating? If not, are there other families who might be interested in working together to develop a Green Sanctuary proposal for congregational leaders?

**A Family Game.** Try cooperative storytelling or play other cooperative games. Invite your friends and neighbors too! Two great resources are the books *Everybody Wins!* and *Win-Win Games for All Ages* by Sambhava Luvmour and Josette Luvmour.

**A Family Ritual.** Many UU congregations celebrate seasonal communions—with water, flowers, or bread. With your family, try an apple communion, a rock communion, or a seed communion. Learn more from *The Communion Book* by Carl Seaburg or create your own.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: WELCOMING WEB GAME (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Ball of yarn

### Preparation for Activity

- Clear an open space where the group can sit in a circle.

- Make sure you know each participant's name so you can prompt others in the circle.

### Description of Activity

This activity makes the concepts of interdependence and the web of life concrete with a web made out of yarn.

Tell the children that together you will create a web, like a spider web. Explain that, holding a piece of the yarn, you will roll the ball to someone else in the circle and welcome them by name. Then, that person will pass the yarn to someone else and the group will continue until everyone has been welcomed and is holding a piece of the yarn. Remind the children:

1. Do not let go of your piece of yarn when you roll the ball of yarn to the next person.
2. Pass the ball of yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to you.

Start the game. When everyone is holding a piece of yarn, point out that you have created a web together.

Ask everyone to hold their piece of yarn. Then, pull on your piece and ask the children what they noticed. Point out that everyone could feel the tug. Invite another child to tug the string and ask the children if they could feel that, as well. See if they can tell, by feel, who made the tug.

Now drop your string and ask the children what happens to the web. Ask the children what they think would happen if half of the group dropped their pieces of yarn. As needed, point out that the web might fall apart. At the end of the game, ask for a volunteer to roll the yarn back into a ball.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: GREEN SANCTUARY TOUR (20 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Optional: Scraps for composting

### Preparation for Activity

- If your congregation has a Green Sanctuary team or committee, invite them to lead this tour of the grounds. If not, prepare a list of things to see that demonstrate care for the earth such as a compost bin, garden, recycle bins, compact fluorescent light bulbs, etc.
- Recruit a volunteer to take pictures or video of the tour.

### Description of Activity

Tour the congregation's building and grounds for signs of "Green Sanctuary" type projects. If your congregation participates in the Green Sanctuary program, it is ideal

to have leaders of that group on hand to talk about it. If not, use the list of congregational green actions you created before the session. If the congregation has a compost bin, have the children take food scraps to "feed" it.

## **ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: COMMUNITY PUZZLE (15 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Community puzzle available from the [Community Puzzle website](http://www.thecommunitypuzzle.com/) (at [www.thecommunitypuzzle.com/](http://www.thecommunitypuzzle.com/))
- Markers or crayons

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Discuss with the religious educator whether to extend this project to all RE groups, or to the congregation during coffee hour, and plan accordingly.

### **Description of Activity**

The Community Puzzle consists of large universal blank puzzle pieces that fit together in any order. Have participants take a puzzle piece and decorate it with their first name and a small picture or a word about how they can care for the interdependent web. When everyone has finished at least one puzzle piece, gather the group around a table and put the puzzle together. Optional: Display the puzzle during coffee hour and invite congregants to add their piece to the puzzle.

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 15: STORY: GROWING GREEN

By Janeen Grohsmeyer.

*Holding up an apple (or other fruit) as you begin telling this story provides a focus. If no one responds to your questions, or if the group is too big, you can give your own answers. If appropriate, slice the fruit and hand out pieces to students.*

Have you ever eaten an apple?

Do you like to have them sliced up? Or do you like to bite into a whole apple with your own teeth and have it go *crunch*? Do you like red apples? Green? Maybe golden?

After you've eaten the apple, what do you do with the core, the part with the seeds and the stem?

*[Hold it up if you have a real apple.]*

At home? At school? Here?

Someday, this apple core will rot. It will get mushy and brown. It will fall apart into smaller and smaller pieces. After a long while, those little pieces of apple core will be part of the dirt. That's called *composting*, when pieces of plants turn into dirt.

The apple seeds can grow in that dirt. The seeds can grow into apple trees. Those apple trees will make more apples. Those apples will have apple cores. And those apples cores will make more dirt, for more seeds, for more trees, for more apples.

That's the circle of life. Things change and turn into other things, and everything works together to create something new.

Here is a story about people in a Unitarian Universalist congregation, who changed how they did things. They decided to work together and create something new.

First, they decided they wanted to have a Green Sanctuary. A sanctuary is a sacred place, a place where you can be safe. The room where we have worship services is a sacred place, and that room is called a sanctuary.

Now, having a green sanctuary doesn't mean you have to paint the walls of that room green. Being green means you help things grow, like plants. They're green.

Being green means being part of the circle of life. Being green means taking care of the Earth, and treating the Earth like a sacred place. The Earth isn't just our home. The Earth is our sanctuary.

The Earth is too big for one person, or even one group, to take care of. So we all work together, and each of us takes care of the part where we are.

To help the Earth, the people in the congregation decided to make a garden and grow food. To have a garden, you need good dirt. To get good dirt, you need compost.

So, whenever the RE class has snacks on Sundays, they collect all the apple cores. Of course, they don't always eat apples. Some days they collect orange peels, or watermelon rinds, or the green leaves off strawberries. Banana peels, celery leaves, carrot tops, cherry pits... All of those plants can become compost.

They need a place to put all the plant pieces, so the plants can have time to turn into dirt.

The older kids got hammers and nails and wood. They built a big, sturdy box, called a compost bin. Some grownups helped.

That compost bin sits outside near the garden. And every Sunday, all the leftover plant pieces from all the RE classes go into the compost bin. The apple cores and the banana peels and the carrot tops and everything else get brown and mushy, then fall apart bit by bit. People put leaves and grass in there, too. It takes a while, but finally, all the plants compost and turn into good brown dirt.

The people in this congregation have Garden days. Everybody gets shovels and rakes. They take the compost, that good brown dirt, and they mix it in with the dirt that's already there.

In the spring, they plant seeds—tomatoes, cucumbers, strawberries, all kinds of good things to eat. Some flowers, too.

All through the summer on Sundays, some of the kids in the RE classes go out and water the plants. Some kids pull out weeds. Some mix in more compost. Parents and teachers help, too. There's always a lot to do in a garden.

But sometimes, it's nice to just sit and look at a garden. A lot of people do that. They watch the birds that come. They watch the butterflies. They touch the plants and sniff their flowers and listen to the humming of the bees.

Gardens are good places to be.

Especially when the food is ready to eat. You can pull a little red tomato off its green stem and pop it right into your mouth. You can eat a strawberry that's still warm from the sun. You can split open pea pods and eat the tiny green peas, one by one by one.

Yes, gardens are good places to be.

But not everyone has a garden. Not everyone has enough food to eat. So, the people in this congregation decided to share what they had grown. Some days, they pick the tomatoes and the cucumbers and the peas. They put them in bags and they take them to a food pantry, a place where anybody who's hungry can get

something to eat. Sometimes the grownups and the older kids stay and help to cook food there. They make sandwiches and soup.

And if there's any food left over, any apple cores or carrot tops or celery leaves, they bring those plant pieces back to their garden and put them in the compost

bin. There, the plant pieces will turn into good brown dirt, and the compost will help the garden grow again.

And so the circle of life goes on, around and around, and in the green sanctuary that is the Earth, people work together and help make things new.

## WORLD OF WONDER: SESSION 15: LEADER RESOURCE 1: HANDPRINT GARDEN MURAL

"Gardening with Kids" from [iStockphoto](#).





## FIND OUT MORE

See a good resource for cooperative games on the [Learning for Life website](http://www.learningforlife.org/exploring-resources/99-720/x08.pdf%20coop%20games) (at [www.learningforlife.org/exploring-resources/99-720/x08.pdf%20coop%20games](http://www.learningforlife.org/exploring-resources/99-720/x08.pdf%20coop%20games)).

The community garden is just one of the Green Sanctuary projects taken on by the people of the [First Unitarian Church of St Louis](http://www.firstuustlouis.org/engaging/special-interest-groups/green-sanctuary-committee) (at [www.firstuustlouis.org/engaging/special-interest-groups/green-sanctuary-committee](http://www.firstuustlouis.org/engaging/special-interest-groups/green-sanctuary-committee)). Other projects include:

- Spiritual meditation tours in different gardens in the area
- A Memorial garden
- Worship services focusing on sustainability and on celebrating the changes of the seasons
- Eating locally grown food at congregation events
- Adult religious education classes on living simply
- An environmental movie series
- Winterizing homes in the community to reduce energy use and costs
- Using non-toxic cleaning products in congregational buildings
- Providing information after worship services about green practices
- Helping people organize carpools.
- Learn more about the Greenbelt Movement and the work of Wangari Maathai.

Founded in 1977, the [Green Belt Movement](http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/) (at [www.greenbeltmovement.org/](http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/)) (GBM) has planted over 47 million trees in Kenya. GBM works at the grassroots, national, and international levels to promote environmental conservation; to build climate resilience and empower communities, especially women and girls; to foster democratic space and sustainable livelihoods.

# SESSION 16: USING OUR SENSES OF WONDER

## SESSION OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

*Wisdom begins in wonder. — Socrates, Greek philosopher*

One of the most important goals of the World of Wonder program is for the children to engage directly with nature. This culminating session provides a shared outdoor experience. Consult with the religious educator to make the necessary arrangements for a field trip, including recruiting adult volunteers; you may wish to invite parents to come with their child. Travel time is not estimated in this session. Factor it into your plans.

The Alternate Activities are designed to be done indoors if it is not possible to go on a field trip or if the weather does not cooperate. Use the Opening activity, Activity 1, Earth Ball Appreciations, and the Closing Activity, and replace the 35 minute "Wonder Walk" with Alternate Activities 1-4.

Note that many of the program rituals have been modified for this session. There is no story; a brief review of the program's stories occurs in the Closing.

### GOALS

This session will:

- Engage participants' senses of wonder and hone their observation skills
- Nurture a sense of responsibility for the interdependent web
- Celebrate bonds formed over the course of the program
- Empower participants as leaders in the group
- Reinforce the seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle, "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Reflect on their experiences over the course of this program
- Appreciate bonds they have formed in the group
- Engage their senses of wonder and awe

- Be inspired and encouraged to protect and care for the interdependent web of all existence
- Understand the seventh Principle as a statement of faith and a call to action.

### SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Opening	5
Activity 1: Earth Ball Appreciations	5
Activity 2: Wonder Walk	35
Faith in Action: World of Wonder Open House	60
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Observation Station	10
Alternate Activity 2: What is Different?	10
Alternate Activity 3: Sound Map	10
Alternate Activity 4: Scent or Sound Canisters	10

### SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for several minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. As you prepare for this last session of World of Wonder, think about what it has been like to spend time with this group.

- What were some of the most memorable moments?
- What new relationships were formed?
- In what ways were you changed by this experience?
- How might you continue to nurture your own sense of wonder?

Allow your own sense of reverence, wonder, awe, and gratitude to be present as you lead this session.

## SESSION PLAN

### OPENING (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)

#### Preparation for Activity

- If possible, lead this session outdoors. Choose a location and adapt the Opening and subsequent activities as needed.
- Select an area where the group can comfortably sit in a circle.
- Create an altar or centering space for the chalice using a small table and a cloth.
- Display the Group Covenant and the Chalice-Lighting Words. Display the Leadership Chart from Session 2.

#### Description of Activity

The opening circle rituals reinforce the theme of interdependence and the web of life and provide leadership opportunities for participants.

Gather participants in a circle around the chalice. Using the Leadership Chart created in Session 2, assign roles for this session. Briefly describe each job. Explain that next time you meet the jobs will change and anyone who did not get a job today will have a chance during another session. Throughout the session, prompt those with leadership tasks at the appropriate times.

Remind the group that each session starts with the ritual of lighting the chalice. In these words or your own, say:

All around the world, Unitarian Universalists of all ages light chalices when they gather together. With this ritual, Unitarian Universalists are connected to one another, even though they might never meet each other. Now we will light the chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist faith; then say together our chalice-lighting words.

As needed, help the designated leaders light the chalice and lead the chalice-lighting words:

We light our chalice to honor the web of all life.

We honor the sun and earth that bring life to us.

We honor the plants and creatures of land, water, and air that nourish us.

And we honor each other, gathered here to share the wonder of our world. — adapted from words by Alice Anacheke-Nasemann

Point to the covenant the group created in Session 1 and briefly review it. Invite any newcomers to sign their name. You might have the Welcoming Leader or Justice Leader invite newcomers to sign the covenant, if those roles have been assigned.

Remind the children that each time we meet, we will explore something about our seventh UU Principle: respect for the interdependent web of life. In these words or your own, say:

Today is our last session of World of Wonder. Today we celebrate our time together—how we have learned, grown, made new friends, and wondered together about the interdependent web. We celebrate all of the connections we have made and appreciate each other and our place in the web of life.

#### Including All Participants

At this age there is a very wide span in terms of reading abilities. Point out words as you read them to the children, but do not expect them to be able to read.

### ACTIVITY 1: EARTH BALL APPRECIATIONS (5 MINUTES)

#### Materials for Activity

- Inflatable earth ball or globe, available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0) (at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=inflatable+earth+ball&x=0&y=0))

#### Preparation for Activity

- Inflate the earth ball or globe.

#### Description of Activity

This activity engages active learners while helping everyone learn the names of participants and leaders and revisit their experience in this program.

As needed, help designated volunteers lead this activity. Stand in a circle with participants. Say in these words or your own:

Throughout our time together, we have used the earth ball as a way to make connections and to help everyone feel welcome. Today we appreciate each other and our time together. Think for a minute about one of your favorite memories from World of Wonder. When someone throws the "earth" to you, catch the

ball, say your name, and share one favorite memory from our time together.

Demonstrate by throwing the ball gently to a co-leader. Have the co-leader say their name.

Then everyone says "Thank you, [co-leader's name]." Then you will throw the earth ball to someone else in the circle, who will say their name and be thanked by the group.

Continue until everyone in the circle has been greeted.

### Including All Participants

If throwing and catching the ball is difficult, do the activity seated with legs out and feet touching, rolling the ball instead of throwing it. If any participant cannot stand or sit on the floor, have everyone play in a circle of chairs.

## ACTIVITY 2: WONDER WALK (35 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Magnifying glass for each participant
- A ball of yarn, and scissors
- A pair of scissors
- Optional: Digital camera
- Optional: Paper and pencil
- Optional: Trail mix, or another healthy snack

### Preparation for Activity

- Consult with the religious educator to select a nearby natural area or park and make appropriate travel arrangements.
- Optional: Recruit adult volunteers to take pictures, write observations, and help with the yarn ritual.
- Optional: Obtain or make trail mix with ingredients everyone can eat; make sure you know about allergies and food restrictions among the participants.

### Description of Activity

Take the group to the natural area or park you have chosen. Tell the children they are going to use their wonder skills: slowing down, paying attention, and using their senses to help them to notice and appreciate nature. Ask:

- Which senses do you think you will use most today?
- Which ones won't you use at all? (They should not use their sense of taste unless you have

brought something you know all have permission to try.)

Remind the children of any parameters that are needed, e.g. stay on the trail or path, speak quietly so as not to disturb or frighten any wildlife, only touch something when a leader says it is okay. If they spot something that they want to share, ask them to signal the group by raising their hand. Encourage questions throughout the walk.

As you walk, ask the children to use their powers of observation to look for nature clues. Tell them sometimes animals leave clues that they live or have visited nearby. Ask, "What might be some clues for animals?" They may suggest a hole, a burrow, or a nest in a tree. You could prompt: A chewed leaf or a torn branch may be a clue that some animal has passed by. A well-worn, small side trail gives a clue that animals have come that way. Optional: Have an adult volunteer to take notes of the nature clues observed.

At some point during the walk, ask the children to close their eyes and mouths and listen for 30 or 60 seconds. Tell them to listen and try to count, on their fingers, all the different sounds they hear. Discuss the different sounds from nature and those that are made by humans. Optional: Have the note-taker list the sounds that were heard.

Distribute magnifying glasses. Encourage the children to take their time looking closely at items on the trails, from the ground to as high as they can look up.

At the end of the walk, sit in a circle in a clearing. Share the quote from this session with the group:

Wisdom begins in wonder.

Ask the group to sit quietly for a moment and think about what that might mean. Then invite volunteers to share their ideas about what the quote means to them. Share your ideas, too.

Ask, "How did it feel to slow down, pay attention and observe nature?" Remind the children they can use their wonder skills any time and any place, for the rest of their lives!

Show the children the ball of yarn and explain that you will create an interdependent web. (If you have done this in previous sessions; mention that this interdependent web will be different.) Explain that you will roll or gently toss the ball of yarn to someone else in the circle. That person will loosely wrap the yarn around their wrist and name something they noticed that made them feel wonder during the walk today. Holding on to the yarn, they will roll the ball of yarn to someone else in the circle who will name something that made them feel wonder during the walk. That person will pass the yarn to someone else until everyone is holding a piece of the yarn and has named their wonder. Remind the children

that they should not let go of their piece of yarn when they roll the yarn to the next person and that they should pass the yarn to someone who is not sitting right next to them.

Start the game by passing the yarn to someone in the group. When everyone is holding a piece, point out that you have created a web together. Tell the group that as a symbol of their lasting connections to the web of life and to each other, you will now go around to each participant and cut the yarn so a piece can be tied around each person's wrist.

If time allows, let the children have some free play time. If you have brought a snack, this is a good time to share it.

## **CLOSING (10 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- World of Wonder Mural from Session 1
- Closing song lyrics from Session 1
- [Taking It Home](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: Stories from World of Wonder, copied for all participants

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Download and adapt the Taking It Home section and copy for all participants (you may wish to email to parents as well).
- Post the World of Wonder mural.
- Display the lyrics to the Closing song, "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands."
- Optional: Print the World of Wonder stories the children heard in this program, and create a booklet for each child. If possible, photograph the World of Wonder mural and print it as the cover page for each booklet.

### **Description of Activity**

Gather in a circle around the World of Wonder mural. Say in these words or your own:

This is the end of our time together. Let's look at our World of Wonder mural and remember what we learned together.

As you point to each picture or symbol on the mural, ask the children what the picture represents. Prompt them to remember the activities and learning they experienced in that session. Affirm any story or game they recall on their own.

Sing the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." Invite the Song Leader to start the song, with accompanying hand motions.

Participants can help each other remember hand motions or can create new ones.

Distribute Taking It Home. Thank the children for participating and express that you appreciated their presence.

## **FAITH IN ACTION: WORLD OF WONDER OPEN HOUSE (60 MINUTES)**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Cloth for altar or centering space
- Group Covenant (Session 1)
- Chalice-Lighting Words (Session 1)
- Leadership Chart (Session 2)
- Handprint Garden Mural from Session 15

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Consult with the religious educator and choose a day and time for the open house. Choose a location that will accommodate a large number of guests.
- Gather supplies for any group activities you wish to provide.
- Optional: Recruit volunteers to prepare a healthy snack, preferably with fruits or vegetables from a local garden.
- Optional: Copy the stories from each session to provide as handouts.

### **Description of Activity**

This gathering invites the World of Wonder participants to share their experiences with the wider congregation and inspire others with their enthusiasm and dedication.

Plan the gathering so children will be able to demonstrate their growing leadership skills. If the congregation has undertaken a project through the World of Wonder program—for example, a community garden, a composting project, or participation in the Green Sanctuary program—ask the minister and congregational leadership to come and thank the children for their leadership and inspiration.

Have the children help set up display areas with artifacts from sessions you would like to highlight. This might include copies of the stories, pictures of the group engaged in projects, and items the children have made (for example, beaded geckos from Session 1).

Designate leadership roles for all the children. Include the regular session tasks such as Chalice Lighter and

Song Leader, and add tasks appropriate for the open house, such as "tour guide" to an outdoor project, such as a compost bin or garden. Optional: Provide supplies for a community mural or puzzle that everyone can help complete.

At the end of the event, have children lead the congregation in the closing song "We've Got the Whole World in Our Hands." At this time, acknowledge the volunteers who helped make the program possible, especially any volunteer leaders, photographer/videographers, adult song leaders, etc. Optional: Ask several parents to organize gifts for the leaders, preferably in the theme of the program; perhaps a copy of Rachel Carson's book [A Sense of Wonder](http://www.amazon.com/The-Sense-Wonder-Rachel-Carson/dp/006757520X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1336844712&sr=1-1) (at [www.amazon.com/The-Sense-Wonder-Rachel-Carson/dp/006757520X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1336844712&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/The-Sense-Wonder-Rachel-Carson/dp/006757520X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1336844712&sr=1-1)).

### Including All Participants

Arrange displays so everyone can move around the space easily. Provide chairs for those who wish to sit.

## LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session and the program as a whole with your co-leader. Share your thoughts with any other team leaders and the religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who was not and why? How could they be better included in future sessions/programs?
- Were there any behavior issues? If so, how can we address them in the future?
- How was the timing? What needs to change for sessions to work better within our time frame?
- Did we successfully create a program characterized by inclusion, diversity, appreciation, respect, noncompetitive environment, and welcome? What could we have done differently?
- What questions or issues arose that we would like to discuss with the religious educator?

## TAKING IT HOME

Wisdom begins in wonder. — Socrates, Greek philosopher

**IN TODAY'S SESSION...** we celebrated our time together with an outdoor Wonder Walk. We used our senses and our "wonder skills" of slowing down, paying attention, and observing nature. We talked about the

quote from Socrates and what it means. The yarn around your child's wrist is a part of the interdependent web we created today and throughout this program.

**EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER.** Talk about... what your child remembers from this program. In what ways was your child—and your family—changed by this experience? Do you do something differently now than before the program, to celebrate or protect our interdependent web of life? For example, have you begun composting, created a garden?

**EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER.** Share the stories from World of Wonder as a family. Find the stories on the [Tapestry of Faith](http://www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith) (at [www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith](http://www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith)) website. Make a booklet of the stories and ask family members to illustrate them.

**A Family Adventure.** Get outside in nature as much as you can!

**A Family Ritual.** Make spending time in nature a priority for your family. Develop a ritual to celebrate your place in the interdependent web of all existence.

Resources for extending the themes of World of Wonder:

### Books

Broda, Herbert W., *Schoolyard-Enhanced Learning: Using the Outdoors as an Instructional Tool, K-8*

Bucklin-Sporer, Arden, *How to Grow a School Garden: A Complete Guide for Parents and Teachers*

Burns, Loree Griffin, *Citizen Scientists: Be a Part of Scientific Discovery from Your Own Backyard*

Carson, Rachel, *A Sense of Wonder*

Casey, Dawn and Wilson, Anne, *Barefoot Book of Earth Tales*

Chiras, Dan, *EcoKids: Raising Children Who Care for the Earth*

Christopher, Todd, *Green Hour: A Daily Dose of Nature for Happier, Healthier, Smarter Kids*

Cornell, Joseph B., *Sharing Nature with Children (I and II)*

Gaylie, Veronica, *The Learning Garden*

Goleman, Daniel; Bennett, Lisa; and Barlow, Zenobia, *Ecoliterate: How Educators Are Cultivating Emotional, Social, and Ecological Intelligence*

Louv, Richard, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder* and *The Nature Principle: Human Restoration and the End of Nature-Deficit Disorder*

Stone, Michael K., *Smart by Nature: Schooling for Sustainability*



Ward, Jennifer, *I Love Dirt!: 52 Activities to Help You and Your Kids Discover the Wonders of Nature*

Weil, Zoe, *Above All Be Kind and Most Good, Least Harm: A Simple Principle for a Better World and Meaningful Life*

### Websites

[Center for Ecoliteracy](http://www.ecoliteracy.org/) (at [www.ecoliteracy.org/](http://www.ecoliteracy.org/))

[Children and Nature Network](http://www.childrenandnature.org/) (at [www.childrenandnature.org/](http://www.childrenandnature.org/))

[Humane Education](http://humaneeducation.org/) (at [humaneeducation.org/](http://humaneeducation.org/))

[National Wildlife Foundation's "Green Hour" campaign](http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Why-Be-Out-There/What-is-a-Green-Hour.aspx) (at [www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Why-Be-Out-There/What-is-a-Green-Hour.aspx](http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Why-Be-Out-There/What-is-a-Green-Hour.aspx))

[Nature Conservancy](http://www.nature.org/) (at [www.nature.org/](http://www.nature.org/))

[Nature Rocks](http://www.naturerocks.org/) (at [www.naturerocks.org/](http://www.naturerocks.org/))

No Child Left Inside; statewide initiatives in [Connecticut](http://www.ct.gov/ncli/site/default.asp) (at [www.ct.gov/ncli/site/default.asp](http://www.ct.gov/ncli/site/default.asp)), [Maryland](http://www.cbf.org/page.aspx?pid=687) (at [www.cbf.org/page.aspx?pid=687](http://www.cbf.org/page.aspx?pid=687)), [Massachusetts](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/gpp/) (at [www.mass.gov/dcr/gpp/](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/gpp/)), and [Michigan](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10369_45551---,00.html) (at [www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10369\\_45551---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10369_45551---,00.html))

[Northwest Earth Institute](http://www.nwei.org/) (at [www.nwei.org/](http://www.nwei.org/))

[Zero Waste Home](http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com/) (at [zerowastehome.blogspot.com/](http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com/))

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: OBSERVATION STATION (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- 10 to 20 objects such as a spoon, pencil, pen, stone, book and so on
- A tray large enough to hold the items, and a cloth
- Paper and pencils

### Preparation for Activity

- Place 8 to 10 of the items on the tray and cover them with the cloth.

### Description of Activity

This activity activates observation and memory skills.

Give each child a sheet of paper and a pencil. Have the children sit where they can see the tray. Uncover the objects for one minute. Then cover them back up. Ask each child to make a list of all the objects they can remember. They can make a symbol for the item or write the word. Uncover the tray, and see who remembered the most objects.

Now, add some new objects and/or replace some objects for each additional round. See if anyone's observation and memory skills increase after a few times with the same objects.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: WHAT IS DIFFERENT? (10 MINUTES)

### Description of Activity

Ask the children to find a partner and sit on the floor facing each other. Tell them to start the activity with Partner 1 turning around and closing their eyes. Then Partner 2 changes four things about the way they look. For example, Partner 2 might take off glasses, tuck in a shirt, roll up a sleeve, take off a shoe, uncross their legs, or undo a ponytail. When Partner 2 is ready, Partner 1 turns back around and has 30 seconds to notice what is different. Then ask the children to switch roles.

## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: SOUND MAP (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- A selection of instruments or sound-making devices such as a bell, a buzzer, a clapper, different types of drums, or a harmonica
- Unlined paper, and pencils or crayons, for all participants

### Preparation for Activity

- Place a variety of instruments or sound making devices in different parts of the room.
- Read the Description of Activity. You may choose to demonstrate with one or two sounds, before leading the activity.

### Description of Activity

Explain that the children will create a sound map of the room. Have the children sit in the center of the room with eyes closed and a sheet of paper and pencil or crayon in front of them. Move around the room quietly from one instrument or sound-maker to another, in a random order, sounding each item five or six times. Invite children to concentrate on the sounds they hear and the direction the sounds are coming from.

Now have the group open their eyes. Demonstrate how the shape of their paper corresponds to the shape of the room. Ask the children to write a number (if they can remember the order in which they heard the sounds) or an X on their paper for each sound to show where they think the sound came from.



## ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 4: SCENT OR SOUND CANISTERS (10 MINUTES)

### Materials for Activity

- Film canisters (or small sandwich baggies if film canister are not available), one per participant plus a few extra
- Selection of essential oils such as lavender, lemon, and peppermint
- Cotton balls
- A box or paper bag large enough to hold all of the canisters
- Optional: Handfuls of small objects such as paperclips, rice grains, or buttons

### Preparation for Activity

- Create scent canisters: Place two or three drops of an essential oil onto a cotton ball, put the cotton balls into canisters or baggies, and seal the canisters/baggies. Place the canisters/baggies in the box or paper bag. Note: There will be multiple canisters of each of the scents.

- Optional: Create sounds canisters, using small objects.

### Description of Activity

Invite the children to reach into the box or paper bag and take one canister. When all have their canisters, tell the children to open them and sniff them lightly. Now ask them to find the other children who have the same scents as they do, and gather together.

Once everyone has found all their matches and they are with their groups, they can return the canisters to the box or paper bag, and do it again.

### Variation

This activity can also be done using sounds. Place a few paper clips in some of the canisters. Add rice in another set of canisters. Place buttons in another. Or make up your own sounds. Make sure the sounds are distinct enough that you can tell them apart. Make sure to use canisters you cannot see through, to keep this a sound matching and not a visual matching activity. Place all the canisters in a box or paper bag and have the children reach in and take one. When all have their canisters, tell them to shake them and listen. Then invite the children to find the others whose canister has the same sound. Repeat, with everyone returning their canisters and trying to get a different one.

## FIND OUT MORE

Resources for extending the themes of World of Wonder:

### Books

Broda, Herbert W., *Schoolyard-Enhanced Learning: Using the Outdoors as an Instructional Tool, K-8*  
Bucklin-Sporer, Arden, *How to Grow a School Garden: A Complete Guide for Parents and Teachers*  
Burns, Loree Griffin, *Citizen Scientists: Be a Part of Scientific Discovery from Your Own Backyard*  
Carson, Rachel, *A Sense of Wonder*  
Casey, Dawn and Wilson, Anne, *Barefoot Book of Earth Tales*  
Chiras, Dan, *EcoKids: Raising Children Who Care for the Earth*  
Christopher, Todd, *Green Hour: A Daily Dose of Nature for Happier, Healthier, Smarter Kids*  
Cornell, Joseph B., *Sharing Nature with Children (I and II)*  
Gaylie, Veronica, *The Learning Garden*  
Goleman, Daniel; Bennett, Lisa; and Barlow, Zenobia, *Ecoliterate: How Educators Are Cultivating Emotional, Social, and Ecological Intelligence*  
Louv, Richard, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder and The Nature Principle: Human Restoration and the End of Nature-Deficit Disorder*  
Stone, Michael K., *Smart by Nature: Schooling for Sustainability*  
Ward, Jennifer, *I Love Dirt!: 52 Activities to Help You and Your Kids Discover the Wonders of Nature*  
Weil, Zoe, *Above All Be Kind and Most Good, Least Harm: A Simple Principle for a Better World and Meaningful Life*

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[Humane Education](http://humaneeducation.org/) (at [humaneeducation.org/](http://humaneeducation.org/))  
[National Wildlife Foundation's "Green Hour" campaign](http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Why-Be-Out-There/What-is-a-Green-Hour.aspx) (at [www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Why-Be-Out-There/What-is-a-Green-Hour.aspx](http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Why-Be-Out-There/What-is-a-Green-Hour.aspx))  
[Nature Conservancy](http://www.nature.org/) (at [www.nature.org/](http://www.nature.org/))  
[Nature Rocks](http://www.naturerocks.org/) (at [www.naturerocks.org/](http://www.naturerocks.org/))  
No Child Left Inside; statewide initiatives in [Connecticut](http://www.ct.gov/ncli/site/default.asp) (at [www.ct.gov/ncli/site/default.asp](http://www.ct.gov/ncli/site/default.asp)), [Maryland](http://www.cbf.org/page.aspx?pid=687) (at [www.cbf.org/page.aspx?pid=687](http://www.cbf.org/page.aspx?pid=687)), [Massachusetts](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/gpp/) (at [www.mass.gov/dcr/gpp/](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/gpp/)), and [Michigan](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10369_45551---,00.html) (at [www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10369\\_45551---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10369_45551---,00.html))  
[Northwest Earth Institute](http://www.nwei.org/) (at [www.nwei.org/](http://www.nwei.org/))  
[Zero Waste Home](http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com/) (at [zerowastehome.blogspot.com/](http://zerowastehome.blogspot.com/))