



# *Soul Matters*

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What does it mean to be  
a people of **BELONGING**?



**RE Resources**

**October 2019**

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# Welcome

Welcome to the Soul Matters Sharing Circle Packet on Belonging for the month of October! Here's how we're exploring this month's theme:

- Session 1. Belonging to a History
- Session 2. Belonging to Yourself
- Session 3. Belonging and Not Belonging
- Session 4. Belonging to Big Things

This month, I'm grateful for trees and how they remind us that we belong to a glorious interdependent web of existence. The new science about "Mother Trees" nurturing saplings humbles me. We have so much to learn about our earth. I spent many summers in the wilderness of Canada and Montana, gazing up at the forest. I hope that our UU children will feel a sense of belonging to the web of life as they too gaze at trees this month.

Another science lens comes from Connie Barlow and The Great Story.org site. I love her "We are Stardust" ritual, and how it connects us to the universe. Once we realize that our elements are recycled from the process of star birth and death, we truly recognize how we belong to the interdependent web of all existence. I take an annual retreat to the desert in Southwest Utah to view the stars. It is a religious necessity for me, made all that richer by reconnecting to The Great Story of the Universe.

The theme of belonging helped me realize how much our white-centered history has distorted and damaged our wholeness. First, there's the whole Christopher Columbus white myth. This story needs to change. The marginalized indigenous peoples deserve their day so their stories can belong in our history.

Finally, there is the concept of "Ubuntu." Ubuntu (oo-boon-too, n.). It means, "I am because we are." Ubuntu is a Zulu or Xhosa word, and a traditional African concept. It's a term for humaneness, for caring, sharing and being in harmony with all of creation. It's unfortunately been preempted by the tech world as an "open source software operating system that runs from the desktop, to the cloud, to all your internet connected things." I would like our UU children to know the original and more powerful meaning of Ubuntu. A story to help with this is suggested as a "For All Ages" offering.

In the midst of all the talk of belonging this month, I hope you and the children you companion find yourself especially grateful for the space of connection and belonging that you've carved out for each other.

**Katie**, on behalf of the [entire Soul Matters Team](#)  
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# Calendar Connections

## October 2019 - Belonging

*Click on the name on each event for more information or inspiration.*

### Interfaith:

- [Feast of St Francis of Assisi](#) (Christian) - Oct. 4
- [Yom Kippur](#) - Jewish Day of Atonement - Oct. 8 - 9
- [Sukkot](#): Feast of Tabernacles (Jewish) - Oct. 13 - 20
- National Observance of [Children's Sabbath](#) - Oct. 18-20
- [Diwali: Festival of Lights](#) (Hindu) - Oct. 27
- [Reformation Day](#) (Christian) - Oct. 31
- Martin Luther posts [95 theses](#) - Oct. 31 1517
- [Samhain](#) (Wiccan) - Oct. 31 - Nov. 1 [[more](#) and [more](#)]

### Unitarian Universalist:

- Birthday of [e e cummings](#) - Oct. 14
- [Michael Servetus](#) burned at the stake in Geneva - Oct. 27 (1553) (more [here](#))

### National & Cultural Holidays:

- [LGBTQ History Month](#)
- [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (Sept. 15 - Oct. 15)
- [Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#)
- [Bullying Prevention Month](#) (more [here](#))
- [ADHD Awareness Month](#)
- Birthday of Mohandas Gandhi - Oct. 2 (1869)
- Thurgood Marshall is first African American associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. - Oct. 2, 1967
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg joins the U.S. Supreme Court as its second woman Justice - Oct. 4, 1993
- [Sisters in Spirit Vigils](#) (Canada) - October 4, 2018 : Honoring the lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)
- [Indigenous Peoples Day](#)(U.S.) - Oct. 8
- Thanksgiving Day (Canada) - Oct. 8 (not major holiday)
- Toni Morrison becomes the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature - Oct. 8, 1993
- [National Coming Out Day](#) - Oct. 11
- John Brown's Raid - Oct. 16 (1859)
- Laquan McDonald is killed by officer Jason Van Dyke in Chicago - Oct. 20 (2014)
- Suffrage Movement March In New York - Oct. 23 (1915)
- [United Nations Day](#) - Oct. 24
- Halloween, All Soul's Eve - Oct. 31
- [Día de los Muertos](#) - Oct.31 - Nov.2

### For Fun and On the Fringe:

- Country Music Month (designated Oct. 1970 [by Richard Nixon](#)) more [here](#) and [here](#)
- World Vegetarian Day - Oct. 1
- First episode of Unitarian [Rod Sterling's](#) "Twilight Zone" - Oct. 1 (1959)
- [World Smile Day](#) - Oct. 6
- Apple introduce new iPod - Oct. 13 (2005)
- [Clergy Appreciation Day](#) - Oct. 14
- War of the Worlds radio lay causes mass hysteria - Oct. 30 (1938)

# Stories for All Ages

*These are “tellable” tales without pictures. See “Book Recommendations” for picture books to read.  
And don’t forget other elements for all ages, listed in the next section.*

## **The Crow and the Partridges (skit)**

adapted from “The Crow and the Partridge”. This is from an ancient collection of Sanskrit fables written probably before 500 AD called the Bidpai (*Bidpay*) fables.

- N: A crow flying across a road saw some partridges strutting along the ground.  
C: What a beautiful gait those partridges have!  
I must try to see if I can walk like them.  
N: She got behind the partridges and tried for a long time to strut like them.  
At last, one of the partridges turned around and asked the Crow what she was all about.  
P: Just what are you trying to be???  
C: Don’t be angry with me. I have never in my life seen a bird that walks as beautifully as you can,  
and I am trying to walk like you.  
P: You are a crow and should walk like a crow. You would look pretty silly if you were to strut like a  
partridge.  
N: But the crow paid no mind to what the partridge said and went on trying to learn how to strut.  
Eventually, she forgot her own way of walking, and never really learned that of the partridge.

Theme Message: Belong to yourself if you want to be your best.

## **The Spirit of Ubuntu**

From the blog of Jacky A. Yenga

<http://www.jackyenga.com/the-spirit-of-ubuntu/>

*Visit the website for the entire story, meanwhile here is an excerpt:*

Ubuntu (oo-boon-too, n.) means, “I am because we are.” Ubuntu is a Zulu or Xhosa word, and a traditional African concept.

..“And that when he said “Go!” they should rush over to the basket, and the first to arrive there would win all the candies. When he said “Go!” they all unexpectedly held each other’s hands and ran off towards the tree as a group. Once there, they simply shared the candy with each other and happily ate it.

The anthropologist was very surprised. He asked them why they had all gone together, especially if the first one to arrive at the tree could have won everything in the basket – all the sweets.

A young girl simply replied: “How can one of us be happy if all the others are sad?...”

Theme Message: “Africans have a thing called ubuntu. It is about the essence of being human, it is part of the gift that Africa will give the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, being willing to go the extra mile for the sake of another. We believe that a person is a person through other persons, that my humanity is caught up, bound up, inextricably, with yours. When I dehumanize you, I inexorably dehumanize myself. The solitary human being is a contradiction in terms. Therefore you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own in community, in belonging.” —

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

### **Rev. Ethelred Brown, the first black Unitarian minister**

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/journeys/session8/finding-your-way>

He had the courage to know that he didn't belong at his childhood trinitarian church. He had the courage to found a Unitarian church in Jamaica, and in Harlem, even when he was told that he didn't belong in a white people's church.

Theme Message: May our community learn from the painful history of racism and make sure that people of color belong as our leaders, our ministers, and as part of our beloved community.

### **We belong to an interdependent web - a Story of Trees That Talk to Each Other**

" <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-whispering-trees-180968084/>

Visit the webpage for the entire story, meanwhile here's an excerpt:

"... Wise old mother trees feed their saplings with liquid sugar and warn the neighbors when danger approaches. Reckless youngsters take foolhardy risks with leaf-shedding, light-chasing and excessive drinking, and usually pay with their lives. Crown princes wait for the old monarchs to fall, so they can take their place in the full glory of sunlight. It's all happening in the ultra-slow motion that is tree time, so that what we see is a freeze-frame of the action.

"Some are calling it the 'wood-wide web,'" says Wohlleben in German-accented English. "All the trees here, and in every forest that is not too damaged, are connected to each other through underground fungal networks. Trees share water and nutrients through the networks, and also use them to communicate. They send distress signals about drought and disease, for example, or insect attacks, and other trees alter their behavior when they receive these messages."

Theme Message: Science is confirming what mythology and our Seventh Principle have shared, that we live in an incredible web of interdependence, that we do truly belong to each other.

### **Rivers**

By Rev. Christopher Buice, on *Worship Web*

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/story/rivers>

Theme Message: Even when it feels and looks like we are separate, our true belonging rests with each other. And when the more we forget that we are connected and belong to each other, the more likely it is to compete with and put each other down.

### **The Emperor's New Clothes**

By Hans Christian Anderson

<http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/EmpNew.shtml>

Theme message: In order to fit in, people will believe something that is absurd. Belonging, on the other hand, means the freedom to be yourself.

### **Recommended Wisdom Tales from "Doorways to the Soul" by Elisa Davy Pearmain**

*(We've recommended this book as an addition to your library. Because of copyright issues, we can only share the story titles)*

Story #25 - The Castle Door (I am thou - belonging to God, and bigger things)

Story #52 - The Question (belonging to your authentic self)

# Other Elements for All Ages

*“For All Ages” doesn’t always have to be a story.*

## **The Welcome Challenge: Who Belongs?**

*From Tapestry of Faith, Signs of Our Faith, Session 10*

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/signs/session10/287883.shtml>

Save a space for an imaginary visitor as you invite the children to the Story for All Ages. Then, invite the congregation to imagine and share how they might welcome different kinds of visitors. Who belongs here?

Theme Message: Who belongs here? We want to be welcoming to all, but sometimes in our actions and words, we create a sense of non-belonging. In this month of belonging, may we work hard to make our actions and words reflect our hope and promise that all are welcome.

## **Song for All Ages**

*Hymns and songs that can be used as a Story for All Ages. Here’s a way to invite the music people into multigenerational worship. Ask them to offer the Song for All Ages with you or instead of the minister lay leader or religious educator.*

### **#1018 Come and Go With Me**

Orange Coast UU Choir: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9Q2Mmc6tDc>

“This might be, as the hymnal suggests, a spiritual from the time of American slavery. This might also be, as some online sources suggest, a traditional blues tune. I hate when the search for information is inconclusive. Because I don’t know whether to talk about the use of 19th century spirituals in our predominantly white congregations, or if we talk about the rich blend of traditions that occurred in the American south, as sounds from Africa, Europe, and the Americas all found themselves woven together into new music.

This is, however, an easy song to learn and lead, and I can see why it’s popular. Although if my searches are evidence of anything, it’s that a song like this can’t be tied down to one particular arrangement or melody – so I caution against the rigidity that other hymns may demand...I leave you with the first known recording of the song, from Blind Willie Johnson with backing vocals by Willie B. Harris: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=ZnTN1ev84yU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=ZnTN1ev84yU)”

Notes from the Far Fringe: <https://farfringe.com/hymn-by-hymn/stj1018-come-and-go-with-me/>

Theme Connection: Where does this hymn belong? As Rev. Debus notes, it is a song with a rich blend of traditions. So, may we too be a people with a rich blend of traditions and belong to a wide world creating justice and kindness as we travel together.

## **We Belong to the Universe - We are Made of Stardust**

by *Connie Barlow of The GreatStory.org*

<http://www.thegreatstory.org/stardust-kids-lessons.pdf> (pg. 27 - 29)

Project or share star images, optional, from <https://www.skyimagelab.com/> and <https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>

Especially moving is the image of the Pillars of Creation in the Eagle Nebula

<https://www.nasa.gov/image-feature/the-pillars-of-creation>

You can read Connie Barlow's description of the Pillars of Creation on pg. 39 of

<http://www.thegreatstory.org/stardust-kids-lessons.pdf>

"Scientists discovered all this cool stuff [about the Universe] during the last 50 years.

And nobody knew any of this before then!"

- "Nobody knew what stars were. Nobody knew that stars were using their immense GRAVITY to squeeze one kind of atom into other kinds of atoms, and that this is what generated heat and light.
- "And nobody knew that ANCESTOR stars who lived and died and recycled their creations back to the Universe had made the very atoms that are now in our bodies. . . . NOBODY KNEW THAT WE ARE MADE OF STARDUST! ... we are made of STARDUST — that all the atoms in our bodies, [and all around us] except for Hydrogen, were made inside of ancestor stars, who lived and DIED and RECYCLED what they had made back to the galaxy— long before our own star, the Sun, was born.

CALL AND RESPONSE:

"So, what are you breathing?" [stardust!] "Louder!" [stardust]

"What are you wearing?" [stardust]

"What is your brain made of?" [stardust]

"What did you eat for breakfast?" [stardust!]

...

For more background on the science, check out <http://www.thegreatstory.org/Stardustbackground.pdf>

Theme Message: We are made of the very atoms from stars, and belong to the universe.

## **Startull, the Story of an Average, Yellow Star (also suggested in the Youth Section)**

*Skit From Connie Barlow of The Great Story.org*

<http://www.thegreatstory.org/stardust-parable.pdf>

A longer parable in 2 acts, suitable for a multigenerational service. No rehearsal needed.

Theme Message: We belong to the great circle of life and death.



# Book Recommendations

## **Tico and the Golden Wings (also suggested in Session 1 for Preschool/Kindergarten)**

By Leo Leonni (author, illustrator)

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/Golden-Wings-Knopf-Childrens-Paperbacks/dp/0394830784/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=1WMA68FG4GTFU&keywords=tico+and+the+golden+wings+by+leo+lionni&qid=1563832625&s=gateway&prefix=Tico+and+the+%2Caps%2C160&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Golden-Wings-Knopf-Childrens-Paperbacks/dp/0394830784/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1WMA68FG4GTFU&keywords=tico+and+the+golden+wings+by+leo+lionni&qid=1563832625&s=gateway&prefix=Tico+and+the+%2Caps%2C160&sr=8-1)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9evuaJd1Xw>

"A wingless bird wants is a pair of golden wings to carry him up over the mountaintops. But when Tico's wish is granted, none of his friends will talk to him. What's so wrong with being different? Tico wonders all alone. One day Tico helps a crying man by giving him one of his golden feathers. A black feather appears in its place. Each day he gives a feather away to someone in need until his golden wings are as black as India ink. When Tico returns to his friends, they are all relieved to see him. "Now you are just like us," they say. But Tico knows there is more to him than the color of his wings" - Amazon.

Theme Message: We belong to each other and we are different from each other. We each have our own memories, and each have our own invisible golden dreams.

## **Stellaluna (also suggested in Session 3 for Preschool/Kindergarten)**

by Janell Cannon

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/Stellaluna-25th-Anniversary-Janell-Cannon/dp/0544874358/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=3B0DT1TVO7LXU&keywords=stella+luna+books&qid=156383245&s=gateway&prefix=stella+luna%2Caps%2C180&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Stellaluna-25th-Anniversary-Janell-Cannon/dp/0544874358/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3B0DT1TVO7LXU&keywords=stella+luna+books&qid=156383245&s=gateway&prefix=stella+luna%2Caps%2C180&sr=8-1)

Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mk8uL9o\\_f9w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mk8uL9o_f9w)

"Knocked from her mother's safe embrace by an attacking owl, Stellaluna lands headfirst in a bird's nest. This adorable baby fruit bat's world is literally turned upside down when she is adopted by the occupants of the nest and adapts to their peculiar bird habits." - Amazon

Theme Message: A story about belonging and not belonging. Stella Luna doesn't belong in the bird nest, and finally returns to being her bat self when her mother finds her.

## **Ira's Sleepover**

by Bernard Waber

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/Ira-Sleeps-Over-Bernard-Waber/dp/0395205034/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=2H7U0XXPHXX2W&keywords=ira+sleeps+over+by+bernard+waber&qid=1563834371&s=gateway&prefix=Ira%27s+Sleep%2Caps%2C178&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Ira-Sleeps-Over-Bernard-Waber/dp/0395205034/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2H7U0XXPHXX2W&keywords=ira+sleeps+over+by+bernard+waber&qid=1563834371&s=gateway&prefix=Ira%27s+Sleep%2Caps%2C178&sr=8-1)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iPaMjh8Kyk>

"Ira is thrilled to spend the night at Reggie's, until his sister raises the question of whether he should take his teddy bear." - Amazon

Theme Message: We sometimes hide parts of ourselves so that we can belong. But Ira finds out that he can be his real self with his teddy bear, and he can share all the parts of himself with his friend.

## **Chrysanthemum (also suggested in Session 2 for Preschool/Kindergarten)**

by Kevin Henkes

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/Chrysanthemum-Kevin-Henkes/dp/0688147321/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swatch\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1563835415&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Chrysanthemum-Kevin-Henkes/dp/0688147321/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1563835415&sr=8-1)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2pCR8YHszM>

"She was a perfect baby, and her doting parents chose a name to match, Chrysanthemum. She is proud of her musical name until kindergarten, when she finds herself in a world of strange new names such as Sue, Bill, Max, Sam, and Joe--in short ( really short) a world of ordinary monikers. That wouldn't be so bad if the others--like Victoria--hadn't made a mean-spirited game of tormenting her, sending her home in tears to be comforted with cuddles and Parcheesi. Wisely, Chrysanthemum's concerned and loving parents try not to interfere, but what can't be put right by them is dealt with by lucky chance. The class learns that their popular music teacher not only has a whopper of a name herself--Delphinium--but also plans to name her expected baby by the prettiest name she has heard, Chrysanthemum. The charming mouse with her delicate little face seems just right for her name..." - review on Amazon

Theme Message: Bullying robs you of a sense of belonging and can make you miserable. But finding a person who supports you can turn the tables and make others want to be as authentic as you are.

## **Nerdy Birdy**

by Aaron Reynolds

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/Nerdy-Birdy-Aaron-Reynolds/dp/1626721270/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Nerdy+birdy&qid=1563836805&s=gateway&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Nerdy-Birdy-Aaron-Reynolds/dp/1626721270/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Nerdy+birdy&qid=1563836805&s=gateway&sr=8-1)

Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8v2L\\_4f-nek](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8v2L_4f-nek)

"My daughter is 6, wears glasses, plays Minecraft and reads novels. She doesn't always fit in with her first-grade peers. One of my pet names for her is Nerdy Bird. This book is adorable and made her feel like a book was written just for her. It's a tale not only of "finding your flock" and the group where you feel like you belong, but also being willing to go outside that comfort zone and find that friends who are much different from you also enrich your life!" - review on Amazon

Theme Message: It is lonely being alone. It's important to be a friend. It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept and celebrate those differences.

## **Guji Guji**

by Chih-Yuan Chen

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/Guji-Chih-Yuan-Chen/dp/1929132670/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crd=12L7CDH22WJ2F&keywords=guji+guji+book&qid=1563839022&s=gateway&sprefix=Guji%2Caps%2C171&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Guji-Chih-Yuan-Chen/dp/1929132670/ref=sr_1_1?crd=12L7CDH22WJ2F&keywords=guji+guji+book&qid=1563839022&s=gateway&sprefix=Guji%2Caps%2C171&sr=8-1)

Video (read by Robert Guillaume): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIQhxayNX1o>

"Chen's vivid characters -- the exuberantly befuddled "crocoduck" and his adopted family, the riotously creepy crocodiles that loom like shadows -- are rendered with wit and warmth...Love overcomes all differences here, and Guji Guji's antics are laugh-out-loud adorable." - The New York Times Book Review from Amazon

# Honoring UU Identity

*Each month we highlight history, wisdom tales and liturgy that are widely embraced among UU congregations and have a connection to the theme. We also include resources which are becoming more widely embraced because they are helping us change and grow our UU culture. Ultimately, the centerpiece of our UU identity is the willingness to evolve, question and expand our UU identity.*

## I. UU History & Historical Figures

### Rev. Ethelred Brown, the first Black Unitarian minister

He had the courage to leave when he felt he didn't belong at his childhood trinitarian church. He had the courage to found a Unitarian church in Jamaica, and in Harlem, when he was told that he didn't belong in a white people's church. <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/journeys/session8/finding-your-way>

### Michael Servetus and the Bloody Times of Three Blind Mice

Who belongs and who doesn't belong? About 450 years ago, on October 27, 1553, if you didn't belong to the faith in power, consequences were dire. Unitarian Michael Servetus was burned at the stake as a heretic. [https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/internationalresources/servetus\\_500\\_anv\\_book.pdf](https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/internationalresources/servetus_500_anv_book.pdf)

### Your Own Historical Figure

Honor a member from your past who has contributed to your congregation being a people of belonging. Maybe it's someone who helped your congregation to work with an interfaith project, and expanded the sense of belonging to a better world. Maybe it is a group of people who researched the history to which your congregation belongs. Maybe it was a person who helped had the courage to know they didn't belong in a former faith community and searched out your congregation where they feel like they belong. Maybe it was someone who walked through the doors for a visit and knew right away that they belonged. The key is to deepen your congregation's engagement with the monthly theme by identifying and celebrating someone from your church's history who helped shape its identity as a community of belonging.

## II. Favorite UU Wisdom Tales

**In the Circle of Love - Edwin Markham** <https://www.questformeaning.org/family-quest/in-the-circle-of-love/>

He drew a circle that shut me out—  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But Love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him in!

## III. Beloved UU Liturgy

### STLT #402 From You, I Receive, to You I Give

Theme Connection: The interdependent web of life to which we all belong.

### STJ #1021 Lean on Me

Theme Connection: Belonging to each other means we help each other.

### STJ #1018 Come and Go With Me (see more in For All Ages Elements Section)

# Chapel

*This chapel template is for programs that want to use our story and meditation recommendations for their pre-session worships rather than in the sessions themselves. This template can also support smaller worship-centered programs with a few activities after. Just use our story and meditation recommendations to create a robust worship experience and then pick an activity or two from the session guides to complete your lesson plan.*

## Belonging Centerpiece

*Choose a color for a cloth, a chalice, an offering box, a way of sharing Joys and Sorrows (candles or rocks in water).*

For “How are we a people of belonging?”

- Cloth Color: white (to highlight the variety of chalices.)
- Chalice: A variety of chalices, to show that they all belong.
- Items: A variety of objects representing belonging from the sessions:
  - NASA photos of nebula, stars, and galaxies
  - A bonsai tree, or vase of twigs and branches
  - SET game
  - Poem by Edwin Markham (see Session 1 for Elementary Ages)
  - A web: a crocheted lace tablecloth, or loosely woven fabric

## Entering

*Note: Post these and the following ritual words on the wall so that guests and newcomers can join in. When you offer Multigenerational services, offer these same words as a whole community of children, youth and adults.*

Invite the singing bowl. (Ring the bowl)

“To this quiet place of beauty, we come from busy things  
Pausing for a moment for the thoughts that quiet brings.”

## Centering Music for belonging

### Everyone Belongs

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJ1QEE\\_RXP8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJ1QEE_RXP8)

Chorus: Everyone belongs

Where they can sing their song

And live in harmony

With neighbors, friends and family

Try just the chorus as a centering song if you are singing it. Or read the bridging verses between singing the chorus.

## **Chalice Lighting**

"We light this chalice for the warmth of love, the light of truth and the energy of action." (or your own congregation's words)

## **Offering (optional)**

"We drop our coins in. We get back pride, to help other people feels good inside."

## **Sharing of Joys and Concerns**

"We listen to each other, it is a holy act

To share our joys and sorrows, with grace it flows on back."

You may always say, "Pass."

If you wish to share, say your name, then light a candle or drop a rock in the water for your joy or concern.

"For all the joys and concerns which remain unspoken, we light this candle/add this rock."

## **Meditation**

Pick a meditation from one of the sessions below.

## **Story**

Pick a story from a session below or from the "For All Ages" section in this packet.

## **Reflection**

Engage the children in a discussion of the message/ take away of your story.

## **Extinguishing the Chalice**

We gather the warmth of love, the light of truth,

and the energy of action into our hearts

Back into the world of do and say

Carry it forward into the dawning day.

Go Now in Peace, Amen.

*Move your limbs to express the actions: gather using a cupping motion from the flame of the chalice to your heart, spread that outward again.*

# Preschool and Kindergarten Sessions

## Session 1

### Belonging to a Story/History

#### The practice of making sure no one gets left out of the story

### Introduction

**Focus Question:** What story do we belong to?

**Practice:** The skill and practice of making sure no one gets left out of the story

**Session Goal:** Learn something about ourselves by belonging to a story.

### Wonder Box

#### Finger Puppets

Have two small finger puppets, different from each other, or 2 of anything, such as pipe cleaners, which can be made into pretend puppets. Place the puppets on your fingers.

Leader: Who are you?

I'm butterfly! [or whatever.]

I'm bear! [or whoever.]

Are you friends?

Butterfly: I'm not sure. She isn't like me.

Bear: I'm not sure. He isn't like me.

Leader: Can you be friends even though you look different?

Ask the children. Can they be friends, what do you think?

Let's find out. What do you like to do?

Butterfly: I like to eat.

Bear: Me, too!

Bear: I like to explore.

Butterfly: Me, too!

Butterfly: I like to rest when I'm tired.

Bear: Me, too!

Etc.

Carry on a conversation, which shows that two different puppets can be friends with each other. Invite the children to contribute why they can be friends. They both like to play. They both like to live outdoors.

And what about the differences? One likes flower nectar, one likes roots. One has fur and one has wings. Etc. Ask the children if they still can be friends. Yes, even though they are different, they can be friends. They can belong together.

When they belong together, they make a story together. What is the story of Bear and Butterfly? Can you help me make one up? Once upon a time there was a Bear and a Butterfly. They were friends. They lived in a meadow. Once, Bear got lost and Butterfly showed her the way to her mother. Once Butterfly was blown into the grass and Bear protected her until the wind stopped. They were friends. They belonged to each other. The End!

Invite the children to add some other adventures, but don't make it too long. They will be making up another story later on.

## Meditation

### “I Wiggle” preparation

I wiggle my fingers. [wiggle fingers]

I wiggle my toes. [wiggle feet]

I wiggle my shoulders. [wiggle shoulders]

I wiggle my nose. [wiggle nose]

Now no more wiggles are left in me, [leader sits down]

So I'll be as still as still can be.

From Tapestry of Faith Chalice Children

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/chalicechildren/297576.shtml>

Next, ring a bell or bowl, and invite the children to listen to it until they can't hear it anymore.

Say something like, “We sit in the silence and imagine we are in a story together. We all belong to the story. It holds us in an imaginary time. We close our eyes and imagine the story we are in together, while we sit quietly with our eyes closed.”

After a few moments, say “We open our eyes and come back from the story. It is nice to share the silence together.”

## Story

*Remember you can use the video for the story if you can't find or don't have the book. Also check the For All Ages and Book Recommendation sections in this packet for ideas.*

### The Big Umbrella

by Amy June Bates (Author, Illustrator), Juniper Bates (Author)

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/Big-Umbrella-Amy-June-Bates/dp/1534406581/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=11275LX8KZMCP&keywords=the+big+umbrella+by+amy+june+bates&qid=1564667024&s=books&prefix=the+big+umb%2Cstripbooks%2C162&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Big-Umbrella-Amy-June-Bates/dp/1534406581/ref=sr_1_1?crid=11275LX8KZMCP&keywords=the+big+umbrella+by+amy+june+bates&qid=1564667024&s=books&prefix=the+big+umb%2Cstripbooks%2C162&sr=1-1)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O37HwF-Wy8>

“By the door there is an umbrella. It is big. It is so big that when it starts to rain there is room for everyone underneath. It doesn't matter if you are tall. Or plaid. Or hairy. It doesn't matter how many legs you have...” - Amazon

Theme Message: “Don't worry that there won't be enough room under the umbrella. Because there will always be room.” - Amazon.

# Activities

## Song: We All Belong at Church

How can we show that we all belong here at church? We can sing a special song: (Tune of Farmer in the Dell)

We all belong at church, we all belong at church,  
Hi, ho the dairy o!  
We all belong at church.

We welcome [John] to church, hello!  
We welcome [John] to church, hello!  
Hi, ho the dairy o!  
We welcome [John] to church, hello!

Insert each child's name as you sing. Each child who is named goes into the center of the circle. Each child then chooses another child to name and welcome into the circle.

## The Story of Us

Props: a few props to suggest a story together, like a scarf, a box, a spoon, a rock.

Invite the children into a circle.

We told the story of Bear and Butterfly. Now we will tell the story of us. When we are together, we belong to a story together. What has happened in our story of us so far?

How did you get to church? Invite the children to tell you and put it into a story.

E.g. Once upon a time, John, Harlan and Katelynn came to church in their car. Their parents were driving.

What did you see when you came to church? Invite children to tell you what they saw and put it into the story.

E.g. John saw a McDonalds with his family, Harlan saw a bird flying with his family, Katelynn saw her neighbor.

What was your favorite part of coming to church?

E.g. John saw his friend, Harlan saw the pretty building, Katelynn saw her teacher.

What made you think?

E.g. John thought about how much he loved his Mommy, Harlan wondered if he would be sad not being with his family, and Katelynn thought about what she might eat after church.

If we put this rock in the story, what happens?

E.g. John kicked the rock, Harlan put it in his pocket, Katelynn threw it really far.

If we put this box in the story, what happens?

E.g. John hid the box behind the blocks, Harlan put a super hero in the box, and Katelynn found a kitten in the box.

What happened then?

E.g. John's rock turned into a dinosaur, Harlan's superhero jumped up and put a rope on the dinosaur, and Katelynn's kitten crawled onto the dinosaur's back.

What happened then?

E.g. The dinosaur walked onto the playground and the children slid down its neck with the kitten!

What happened then?

E.g. Everyone got tired and they came into the room, sat down and rested.



Make up the story, making it as fantastical as you wish. The children will enjoy coming up with some crazy antics. Try to weave part of the story outside, if this is a possibility for your group, so that you can go outside and act it out, later  
End with the children sitting in a circle, and say, "That is the story of us, belonging together!"

Theme Message: We belong to a story, the story that wraps around our lives, and makes us belong to each other.

### **Art - Your Golden Dream in the Story of Us**

Invite the children to draw something from their "Story of Us." Just like the Big Umbrella, we too have our own place in the story. If possible, write their words on their art so the parents can tell what their child was imagining. "This is the dinosaur we slid down in the story of us!" Ask them to make a big umbrella and place as many people and things under it as they want.

### **"Sunshine" - experiences outdoors, in nature, or with movement**

If you have access to outdoor space, go outside and act out the part of the "Story of Us" that took place outside. "Let's all pretend to slide down the back of the dinosaur! Or carry the kitten!"

### **Service**

Invite the parents to hear about the Story of Us as they enter after the service.

Or write down their "Story of Us" and share it with the congregation through photos on Social Media (make sure to have photo permission) and/or words. "Here is the Preschooler's "Story of Us" showing how we belong together."

Another option is to use the drawings that the preschoolers drew or take a photo of the artwork to tell the story.

## Session 2

### Belonging to Yourself

### The Practice of Knowing Who You Are

#### Introduction

**Focus Question:** Who are you?

**Practice:** The skill of understanding yourself.

**Session Goal:** Celebrate each of us as a unique and special person.

**Calendar Connections:** National Coming Out Day, Oct. 11, Bullying Prevention Month

#### Wonder Box

*The Idea for the Wonder Box comes from Tapestry of Faith's Wonderful Welcome by Aisha Hauser, and Christina Leone Tracy, who presented it at General Assembly.*

Prop in the Wonder Box: a flower

- What is in the Wonder Box?
- It's a flower.
- We look at it and see one flower.
- Each way a flower grows is unique, just like us.
- This flower doesn't look exactly like every other flower, just like us.
- It belongs to itself.
- Our theme this month is belonging.
- Today we practice belonging to yourself and knowing who you are.
- You each have a special name. Let's go around the circle and say our names.
- After each child says their name, invite the group to say, "Welcome, [Joey!]"
- We belong together at church and are accepted just the way we are.

#### Meditation

##### "I Wiggle" preparation

I wiggle my fingers. [wiggle fingers]

I wiggle my toes. [wiggle feet]

I wiggle my shoulders. [wiggle shoulders]

I wiggle my nose. [wiggle nose]

Now no more wiggles are left in me, [leader sits down]

So I'll be as still as still can be.

From Tapestry of Faith Chalice Children

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/chalicechildren/297576.shtml>

Next, ring a bell or bowl, and invite the children to listen to it until they can't hear it anymore.

Say something like, "We sit in the silence and imagine we are a flower. Each of us is a different type of flower. Each is different. All belong. Together we make a beautiful bouquet of flowers. Each is different. All belong. Take a deep breath. Hold your hands together and feel the energy flow between your hands. You belong to yourself, and we love you for that special person you are. Feel the love fill you up as we sit for a moment in silence."

After a few moments, say "It is important to share the silence together."

## Story

Remember you can use the video for the story if you can't find or don't have the book. Also check the For All Ages and Book Recommendation sections in this packet for ideas.

### Chrysanthemum

by Kevin Henkes

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/Chrysanthemum-Kevin-Henkes/dp/0688147321/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swatch\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1563835415&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Chrysanthemum-Kevin-Henkes/dp/0688147321/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1563835415&sr=8-1)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2pCR8YHszM>

“She was a perfect baby, and her doting parents chose a name to match, Chrysanthemum. She is proud of her musical name until kindergarten, when she finds herself in a world of strange new names such as Sue, Bill, Max, Sam, and Joe--in short ( really short) a world of ordinary monikers. That wouldn't be so bad if the others--like Victoria--hadn't made a mean-spirited game of tormenting her, sending her home in tears to be comforted with cuddles and Parcheesi. Wisely, Chrysanthemum's concerned and loving parents try not to interfere, but what can't be put right by them is dealt with by lucky chance. The class learns that their popular music teacher not only has a whopper of a name herself--Delphinium--but also plans to name her expected baby by the prettiest name she has heard, Chrysanthemum. The charming mouse with her delicate little face seems just right for her name...” - review on Amazon

Theme Message: Bullying robs you of a sense of belonging and can make you miserable. But finding a person who supports you can turn the tables and make others want to be as authentic as you are.

## Activities

### “Hands of You” Drawing

Invite the children to put their hands into the circle and take a look at them. Each hand is unique and special, just like you are unique and special. Your hands belong to you and you only.

At a table create an outline of their hand. Draw around their spread fingers, then have them color their hands. Each hand is unique.

If they are able, write their own name on their hand drawing paper. Or the teacher can write their name. Now invite them to make a decoration out of their name, as unique as they are.

### Sesame Street Grover Video - “I am Special”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gms-Yk7mzv4>

### Songs

I Am Special (Tune: Frere' Jacques)

I am special, I am special (point to self)  
If you look, you will see  
Someone very special, someone very special,  
It is me; it is me!! (Point to self)

Look who's special.  
Look who's special.  
Is it her, you, or me?  
No, it's all of us, you see!  
We're all so special as can be!

Special Special (Tune: Twinkle Twinkle Little Star)

Special special special me

How I wonder what I'll be

In this big world I can be

Anything I want to be

Special special special me

How I wonder what I'll be

From <https://childcarelounge.com/pages/i-am-special-theme-and-activities>

See this site for other great activity suggestions on the theme.

**“Sunshine” - experiences outdoors, in nature, or with movement**

You are a special height. Look at all the different sizes that we are. Have each child measure a string from the top of their head to their feet. Cut the string and let the child go around the area to find things that are taller than them and shorter than them. Adapted from <https://childcarelounge.com/pages/i-am-special-theme-and-activities>

**Service**

Remind the children to help other children by reassuring them and reminding them they are special. When someone is feeling bad about who they are, it helps to have others remind you that you are special, unique, and beautiful.

# Session 3

## Belonging and Not Belonging

### The Practice of Finding the Courage to Leave

#### Introduction

**Focus Question:** How can we set ourselves free when we feel we don't belong?

**Practice:** The skill of finding the courage to leave when we need to.

**Session Goal:** Begin to understand the difference between belonging and not belonging.

#### Wonder Box

*The Idea for the Wonder Box comes from Tapestry of Faith's Wonderful Welcome by Aisha Hauser, and Christina Leone Tracy, who presented it at General Assembly.*

Props: a piece of mango (dried or fresh; or other fruit) and a gummy worm (or other bird food)

- What is in the Wonder Box today?
- Does anyone know what this is?
- It's a piece of mango, a fruit, that fruit bats especially like, and a worm, a pretend worm.
- Fruit bats only eat fruit.
- Worms and bugs do not belong in a fruit bat's meal.
- Only fruit belongs.
- We are learning about belonging this month.
- A baby fruit bat belongs with its family in a tree, eating mangoes and fruit.
- It doesn't belong in a bird family.
- You belong with the people who care about you.
- You don't belong where you are not safe.
- If it is not safe, you need to leave.
- We all belong here in our church family.
- This is where we help each other be safe and happy.

#### Meditation

##### "I Wiggle" preparation

I wiggle my fingers. [wiggle fingers]

I wiggle my toes. [wiggle feet]

I wiggle my shoulders. [wiggle shoulders]

I wiggle my nose. [wiggle nose]

Now no more wiggles are left in me, [leader sits down]

So I'll be as still as still can be.

From Tapestry of Faith Chalice Children

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/chalicechildren/297576.shtml>

Next, ring a bell or bowl, and invite the children to listen to it until they can't hear it anymore.

Say something like, "We imagine we are in a windy storm. Can you make the wind noise? The wind blows us away from our home! We don't belong! Where are we? We look around and there is someone we know. It is so good to see them. Now our family and friends find us, and take us home, where we belong."

After a few moments, say "We love to be where we belong."

## Follow up to the Meditation

Invite their responses to the meditation. What was it like where the wind blew you? Who did you see who found you and took you home where you belong?

## Story

*Remember you can use the video for the story if you can't find or don't have the book. Also check the For All Ages and Book Recommendation sections in this packet for ideas.*

### Stellaluna

by Janell Cannon

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/Stellaluna-25th-Anniversary-Janell-Cannon/dp/0544874358/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=3B0DT1TVO7LXU&keywords=stella+luna+books&qid=1563833245&s=gateway&sprefix=stella+luna%2Caps%2C180&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Stellaluna-25th-Anniversary-Janell-Cannon/dp/0544874358/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3B0DT1TVO7LXU&keywords=stella+luna+books&qid=1563833245&s=gateway&sprefix=stella+luna%2Caps%2C180&sr=8-1)

Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mk8uL9o\\_f9w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mk8uL9o_f9w)

"Knocked from her mother's safe embrace by an attacking owl, Stellaluna lands headfirst in a bird's nest. This adorable baby fruit bat's world is literally turned upside down when she is adopted by the occupants of the nest and adapts to their peculiar bird habits." - Amazon

Theme Message: A story about belonging and not belonging. Stella Luna doesn't belong in the bird nest, and finally returns to being her bat self when her mother finds her.

## Activities

### Eat Mangos

Stella Luna is a fruit bat and loves mangos (or other fruit.) There was a mango in the Wonder Box. Share the taste of a mango with dried Mangoes or fresh with the children. Variation: Serve other kinds of fruit if mango isn't available. Stella Luna didn't belong in the bird nest where they ate bugs and worms. She belonged with her fruit bat family, hanging upside down from a tree branch and eating fruit!

### Simple "Bat" Song/Fingerplay

Five Little Bats Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBH-LmQgGJQ>

#### Sleeping Bats

(to the tune of "Frere Jacques")

Bats are sleeping,

Bats are sleeping,

Upside down,

Upside down,

Sleeping in the morning sun,

Waiting for the night to come,

Then they'll fly all around,

Then they'll fly all around.

### **Where Do You Belong?**

Invite the children to choose a toy or figurine and make a house where it belongs.

Or invite them to draw a picture of their home where they belong.

### **Belonging and Not Belonging Game**

Invite the children to find things in the room and suggest where they belong and where they don't belong. I.e. a vegetable belongs in a garden, a baby doll belongs wrapped up in a blanket, a little family belongs in their house.

Where don't they belong? A vegetable doesn't belong on a roof, a baby doll doesn't belong in a street, the little family doesn't belong inside a pillow.

Can the children find other things that belong and don't belong? A marker belongs in its box. A marker doesn't belong on the wall. A garbage can belongs on the floor, it doesn't belong on the table. A chair belongs near the table it doesn't belong in the door.

### **Fruit Bat Video**

Invite the children to learn more about the fruit bats, like Stella Luna, and how they like to belong in a group and hang together in trees. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSCAZvrAREk>

### **Clean Up - Where do things belong?**

Invite the children to put their toys where they belong and clean up the room. Doesn't it feel nice to be where you belong?

### **Sunshine - connection to Nature, outdoors**

Take a walk and find things that don't belong to the outdoors. This is a time to find some trash and clean up an outdoor space together.

Or

Hide some items beforehand and invite the children on an outdoor hunt to find the things that don't belong in nature - a plastic cup, a marker, anything from inside will do. Keep track of how many you have hidden so you know if they have all been found.

### **Service**

Cleaning up the outdoor area.

Or

Share mangoes with the coffee hour.

## Session 4

### Belonging to Big Things

### The Practice of Opening to the Interdependent Web

#### Introduction

**Focus Question:** How do we belong to the Earth, God and the Universe?

**Practice:** The skill of making room for awe and interconnectedness.

**Session Goal:** Begin to understand that everything belongs to each other.

**Calendar Connection:** Samhain, Halloween, Diwali

#### Wonder Box

*Credit: The Idea for the Wonder Box comes from Tapestry of Faith's Wonderful Welcome by Aisha Hauser, and Christina Leone Tracy, who presented it at General Assembly.*

#### Expecting Change

Leader Script: (say in your own words)

Wonder Box - a star: cut out, photo, or other form

- What is in the Wonder Box?
- It's a star.
- Where do we see stars? (in the sky, at night, sometimes during the day)
- What else do we see in the sky? (clouds, moon, sun, atmosphere)
- Our theme this month is belonging.
- We belong to the whole sky, to the earth, the moon, the sun and the stars.
- We are made of the same stuff as stars.
- There is a connection inside of us to the stars and to everything.
- We call that connection a web, just like the web a spider weaves.
- We call the web the INTERDEPENDENT WEB of LIFE.
- Can you say that big word with me - INTERDEPENDENT.
- That means we belong to each other and to everything.
- Let's hold hands and make an interdependent web of life right here.
- We are interdependent between each other. We are friends.
- We belong to each other, and to everything.

#### Meditation

##### "I Wiggle" preparation

I wiggle my fingers. [wiggle fingers]

I wiggle my toes. [wiggle feet]

I wiggle my shoulders. [wiggle shoulders]

I wiggle my nose. [wiggle nose]

Now no more wiggles are left in me, [leader sits down]

So I'll be as still as still can be.

From Tapestry of Faith Chalice Children

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/chalicechildren/297576.shtml>



Next, ring a bell or bowl, and invite the children to listen to it until they can't hear it anymore.

Imagine there is a waterfall of beautiful light shining. It flows into your body and fills you with beauty and calm. Imagine the light filling your legs, your stomach, your chest. It makes you feel so relaxed and happy. The light fills your arms and neck, and finally your head and face. You turn to your neighbor in the circle and smile and imagine the light in them. You look around and imagine the light shining everywhere. You belong to that light, and it is part of who you are. Invite the children to hold that light in their heart for a few moments of silence.

### **Response to Meditation**

Invite the children to share what reflections they felt in the meditation. What color was your light?

## **Story**

### **All I See Is Part of Me**

*by Chara M. Curtis (Author), Cynthia Aldrich (Illustrator)*

Book: <https://www.amazon.com/All-I-See-Part-Me/dp/0692339868>

Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5V\\_gv9X9TE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5V_gv9X9TE)

"This is unquestionably the most accessible and beautiful book about the interconnected web of existence I have ever found. I used it as the children's sermon at the UU Church where I sometimes preach, and the response was incredible. People came up to me afterwards raving about how it simply and movingly it expressed the most complex spiritual concept that is at the heart of the faith.

It is, perhaps, particularly valuable at a time when physicists are sounding more and more like mystics; Neil DeGrasse Tyson has said that we are part of the universe and the universe is part of us and that should make us feel large, not insignificant. That key truth is the crux of "All I See is Part of Me."

Chara Curtis's poetic story begins with a small child of indeterminate gender (some children see a girl, some a boy and that is part of the charm) sitting on a hilltop and observing the world, solipsistically sensing that it was all somehow connected to her (or him). That feeling is confirmed by conversations with the various elements of the world: Brother Sun and Sister Star. These encourage the child to look inside to find the connection with the Universe, manifesting as a light (energy).

"All the plants, the animals and trees  
Are in your light, and you are these."

In that light, the child finds all the answers to any question that can be asked, and touches, in a profound way, eternity...This is a kind of spirituality for the 21st Century when science and faith are coming closer to each other than they ever have. It is non-sectarian; quite the opposite. It is an expression, on a level even a child can understand, of the Spirit that moves the Universe and is accessible in the smallest blade of grass.

"I said a prayer I know was heard,  
'Cause all I am hears every word."

Amen." - Jeremy McGuire review on Amazon

Theme Connection: We belong to the universe, and to everything.

# Activities

## Fingerplays and Songs

### **The More We Get Together (With sign language)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJKUfrJKtFM>

The more we get together, together, together  
The more we get together, the happier we'll be.  
For your friends are my friends,  
And my friends are your friends,  
The more we get together, the happier we'll be.

Add verses with actions and encourage the children to do the actions together:

The more we play together, together, together...  
The more we hug each other, each other, each other...  
The more we jump together, together, together...

Do some examples and then let the kids suggest new verses!

### **Star Drawing**

Provide black construction paper, white, gold, and silver crayons, star stickers, and other art materials. Invite the children to draw the sun, moon, themselves, their friends and all of the interdependent web of life. See the "Service" activity suggestion for an option too.

### **Star Hat (for Halloween or Samhain)**

Turn yourself into a star! Cut out the center from a paper plate, leaving some "star" points connected to the rim. See <https://buzzmills.typepad.com/blog/2013/02/paper-star-hats.html>. Invite the children to decorate it with star stickers and markers.

### **"Sunshine" (connection with nature and our bodies)/ Movement**

Go outside and look for webs. Notice how the strands are woven together.  
Or Take some yarn or string outside and invite the children to make a web.

### **Service**

Invite the children to make a group drawing with the art supplies to give to the service leader, minister, or other leader. Write "The Interdependent Web of Life. All We See is Part of Me. by the Preschool." or make them a star hat.

# First Through Fifth Grade Sessions

## Session 1

### Belonging to a History

The practice of making sure no one gets left out of the story

### Introduction

**Focus Question:** What history do we belong to?

**Practice:** The skill and practice of making sure no one gets left out of the story.

**Session Goal:** Learn something about ourselves by belonging to a history that is whole and includes people who have not been included.

**Calendar Connections:** Indigenous Peoples Day, Yom Kippur, LGBTQ History Month

### Wonder Box/ Reflection

*The Idea for the Wonder Box comes from Tapestry of Faith's Wonderful Welcome by Aisha Hauser, and Christina Leone Tracy, who presented it at General Assembly.*

#### Who belongs in history?

Wonder Box prop: cards from a ["SET" game](#) or index cards with a triangle, square, circle and a line drawn on them. A larger circle, such as a paper plate, a piece of yarn large enough to make a circle.

- What's in the Wonder Box. Some cards with shapes on them.
- This month our theme is "What does it mean to be a people of Belonging?"
- Today, we wonder about who belongs in history.
- *Lay the cards down so everyone can see them.*
- Each of these cards is different, yet some belong, and some don't. Does anyone know how to play the game "SET?" Can you find three cards that belong in a set? (or if using the index cards, how might these cards belong in a set? It is the set of shapes. The line doesn't belong.)
- History is like the game. It is a story told from people who belong in a set.
- Until just a few years ago, white people decided whose stories belonged and whose didn't.
- History didn't include many people whose skin was not white. There weren't stories about people who were not straight. There weren't stories about people who weren't Christian.
- Now, in Unitarian Universalism, we are trying hard to include stories of people who have been left out.
- These have been people of color, people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) and people who are Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and Earth Centered religions.
- We value diversity and believe that belonging to a larger circle is the way to practice Unitarian Universalism.
- Just as we include these cards in a larger circle (place all of the cards on the paper plate or make a circle with the string.
- This month is LGBTQ History Month. We are celebrating all kinds of people who have changed the world and have been LGBTQ. (Show the poster from <https://lgbthistorymonth.com/resources>
- This month is the Jewish High Holiday of Yom Kippur.
- This month is Indigenous Peoples Day, so we seek to understand their stories and the real story of Christopher Columbus.
- We believe the stories of these people belong in history, too.

## Meditation

### In the Circle of Love

Edwin Markham <https://www.questformeaning.org/family-quest/in-the-circle-of-love/>

Invite the group to get into a comfortable position. Ring a chime and let the sound disappear.

I invite you to close your eyes and imagine a circle. It is a very small circle. Only certain people who look and act a certain way are inside the circle. Imagine yourself outside the circle. What does it feel like to be outside the circle? You really want to get in the circle, but no one invites you, no one lets you in. You see a being, made of love. That being and you watch the circle. You see the circle disappear. You see a glowing golden circle appear, that invites everyone in, and opens and re-opens as friends, family, neighbors, town, on and on appear.

Hold that golden circle, hold that being made of love in your heart as we listen to this poem:

*He drew a circle that shut me out—*

*Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.*

*But Love and I had the wit to win:*

*We drew a circle that took him in!*

By Edwin Markham, Universalist.

As we return to our circle, hold on to the beautiful sense of belonging given to you by that being of love.

### Sharing from the Visualization

What did you see? What did you feel?

Allow enough silence and reflection so the participants feel respected and treated gently.

## Story

### Living Stories from Oyate

<http://www.oyate.org/index.php/resources/45-resources/living-stories#mayana>

Choose and read several of these true stories of indigenous children's experiences about not belonging, to help our UU children understand how some peoples have been left out of history.

*Especially recommended are:*

- Mayana's story about dealing with Christopher Columbus in third grade
- Elizabeth's story about Tweedy Bird and the Ten Little Indians in preschool
- Raven's story about The Courage of Sarah Noble in third grade

"Many non-Indian people—including authors and publishers—seem to have the notion that Indians are "history," cut off somewhere in the early 1900s, or at best marginally existing on a few reservations. To hear these living voices is to recognize that Native people are still connected to history, to family, to land, culture and community. We are still alive. We are still here...

Most of these "living stories" appeared in A BROKEN FLUTE: THE NATIVE EXPERIENCE IN BOOKS FOR CHILDREN, and many are new." <http://www.oyate.org/index.php/resources/45-resources/living-stories#shelly>

Theme Connection: Part of belonging is belonging to a history. There are parts of our history which aren't told or aren't told much. We want to belong to a history when we invite all of the voices of those who had a part in the history.

# Activities

## Hang LGBTQ History Month Posters

<https://lgbthistorymonth.com/resources>

Print out posters from the above site and invite the children to hang them in appropriate places. Print out extras so those interested can take them to places they frequent.

## History Video

### **The Real Story of Christopher Columbus Video (4.5 min) (a brutal history, be aware)**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aF\\_unlvjccA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aF_unlvjccA)

If you have older elementary children, this would be a way to share how history didn't originally tell the real story of Christopher Columbus, and how the old version was not real.

### **More Than Bows and Arrows Video, optional (45 minutes; for a whole session)**

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDICZu12wDQ>

Watch this together for Indigenous Peoples Day, Oct. 8. It is a bit dated, but it underlines how we need many voices to make a history that is whole.

“Discover the many contributions of native peoples to the development of the United States and Canada. Indian inventions such as sunglasses, snowshoes, and rubber have changed the world! From cliff dwellings and ancient cities to over 200,000 prehistoric earthen mounds that rival the pyramids of Egypt...from early mines to medicine men...to astronomical observatories and Hohokam irrigation canal systems, here is an uncommon and unequalled story narrated by N. Scott Momaday, Pulitzer prize winning author.”

Theme Connection: We will not be whole until we understand the history that wasn't told. In order to be whole, we need to find out and invite those who haven't had their stories told, into the circle of belonging.

## Set (card game)

Game: <https://www.amazon.com/SET-Family-Game-Visual-Perception/dp/B00000IV34>

Video on how to play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kc4WrL7cxeg>

Award winning card game for all ages.

Theme Message: Which shapes, number and/or color belong and don't belong?

## “Sunshine” - experiences outdoors, in nature, or with movement

### Games to Build Belonging

#### Tug of Peace Game

Materials: a long thick rope tied in a secure knot to form a circle.

<https://cooperativegames.com/fun-free/tug-of-peace/>

Theme Connection: Belonging to a circle gives us all support!

#### Parachute Mushroom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Obu9nc9cgN0>

Theme Connection: All belong in our circle and under our mushroom parachute!

#### Hula Hoop Pass

<https://www.playworks.org/resource/game-of-the-week-hula-hoop-challenge/>

Theme Connection: We belong to circles within circles!

### **What's In a Name?**

“Arrange students in partners. Have one student begin talking about their first name to their partner, telling them what it is (if this is the first day of school or if they are new, or in case they didn't already know). Once they have said their name, they can now share a little bit about it (give students about 2 minutes for the introduction). Some of the things you may encourage students to talk about are the meaning of their name, unique ways to spell it, why they were given it, what their name means in other languages, if they were named after someone, nicknames, last name, etc. After about 2 minutes, they are then to switch and let their partner discuss their name as well. Remind students to pay close attention as their partner discusses their name! Encourage them to continue to pay close attention throughout the activity! Once both partners have shared their names, pair one set of partners with another set of partners, forming a group of 4. The idea is to have each student introduce their partner to the two new students in the group. Encourage students to include as much of their partner's description as they can remember. Each student gets a chance to introduce their partner. Watch and enjoy as your students listen carefully, repeat and get to know their peers!”

<https://www.teachhub.com/6-awesome-cooperative-classroom-games>

Theme Connection: When we know each other, it's easier to belong.

### **Wave Stretching**

“Have students form a large circle (you may even choose to do this in small groups depending on the space). Begin by picking one student within the circle. Have them call out a stretch. Going either clockwise or counter-clockwise, every student must do the stretch one by one. The idea is to pass the stretch as you go along. Once the stretch gets back to the original student you chose, have the next student call out a new stretch. The other students will have to hold the initial stretch until the new stretch makes its way to them. You can play this activity for however long you'd like; however, depending on the age and grade level, you may want to limit the number of stretches and eventually increase in number as they become more familiar with them game, or as they learn additional stretches.”

<https://www.teachhub.com/6-awesome-cooperative-classroom-games>

Theme Connection: Our circle of belonging changes and is flexible.

### **Service**

During the High Holiday of Yom Kippur in Judaism, the Jews seek to improve themselves and the world in the coming year. Watch this short video about Yom Kippur

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQN9ym9DfDs>

How would you try to improve yourself and the world in the coming year? How would you seek to include all peoples in a circle of love?

Think of one way you could start today and do it.

## Session 2

### Belonging to Yourself

### The Practice of Knowing Who You Are

#### Introduction

**Focus Question:** Who are you?

**Practice:** The skill of understanding yourself.

**Session Goal:** Celebrate each of us as a unique and special person.

**Calendar Connections:** National Coming Out Day, Oct. 11, Bullying Prevention Month

#### Wonder Box/ Reflection

*The Idea for the Wonder Box comes from Tapestry of Faith's Wonderful Welcome by Aisha Hauser, and Christina Leone Tracy, who presented it at General Assembly.*

Prop in the Wonder Box: a mirror

- What is in the Wonder Box?
- It's a mirror.
- This month we are reflecting on "What does it mean to be a people of belonging."
- Today, we are reflecting on belonging to yourself.
- What does it mean to you, to belong to yourself?
- We look in the mirror and see our outside, and we know we have an inside life, too.
- That inside makes us unique.
- Some would say it means understanding that each person has their own unique way of being in the world, and their own gifts to bring to the world.
- When we understand ourselves, we belong to ourselves.
- None of us is perfect, but we can understand ourselves and belong to ourselves.
- A person who studies society is called a sociologist. One sociologist, Brené Brown, studied "Belonging,"
- She teaches about the difference between fitting in and belonging.
- Fitting in means sacrificing part of who you are to conform.
- Can you think of times when you sacrificed a part of who you are to conform? (pretended you didn't like something, made fun of someone to fit in, bought something all your friends have)
- Belonging means being accepted for who you are. It means the courage to stand alone and say, "This is who I am."
- Can you think of a time when you felt accepted for who you are? (at a Grandparents house, at church)
- When we understand ourselves we find the courage to reach out to others, not just the people we know, but also the ones we don't.
- We create a connection to others.
- So belonging is the opposite of loneliness.

## Meditation for Belonging to Yourself

Visit <https://yogainternational.com/article/view/guided-meditation-for-self-love> for a beautiful meditation on Loving Yourself.

*Let yourself relax. Take in a nice, slow, deep breath. And then let it out. Breathe in. And out. Deep. Slow. Breathing in. And breathing out. (Pause)*

*And let your bodies relax. Let your muscles relax. Let your face relax. Let your mind relax. Whatever you've been carrying around with you all day that you don't need right now, let it go. Let all of you—body, mind, and spirit—deeply and fully relax. Keep breathing. (Pause)*

*Place your hands over your heart.*

Start at the sentence:

“How does it feel to place my hands over this tender area, this place where I experience love for self and others?”

End at the sentence:

“When you're ready, take a few more deep, mindful breaths and then softly open your eyes. Sit for a few moments to acknowledge the unique experience you had during this meditation.

This is a beautiful opportunity to learn something new about yourself and tune into your physical and emotional needs. Let self-love enable you to build a stronger relationship with yourself and allow you to show up more fully in your life.”

### Story

*Remember you can use the video for the story if you can't find or don't have the book. Also check the For All Ages and Book Recommendation sections in this packet for ideas*

#### **Bremontown Musicians**

*From Tapestry of Faith, Wonderful Welcome, The Gift of Acceptance*

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/welcome/session12/bremontown-musicians>

Theme Message: Each has its own special gifts and identity; they belong to themselves.



## Activities

### Invite a Friend Home after Church

In my (Katie's) childhood, we made it a practice to invite children home to our house from whatever UU church we belonged to. That way we got to know each other better and make friends.

"In the mid-60's, we belonged to Kanawha Valley Fellowship, now the UU Congregation of Charleston, W.V. We used to bring friends home to play with us, my sister and I, in 2nd and 4th grade. One of our friends was Meg Riley, now the Rev. Meg Riley of Church of the Larger Fellowship. My mother remembers that Meg didn't like spaghetti much and so Mom always had a can of chicken noodle soup ready for Meg's lunch. The UU Fellowship provided a lifeline for our young family which moved around a lot. We felt we belonged."

Invite the children and families in your group to consider this tradition. How might they invite someone? Can they make a poster reminding the church families to "Invite a Friend Home?"

Theme Connection: When belong to ourselves, we know ourselves and can welcome the stranger.

### Your Hand as a Constellation

Materials: pieces of paper in black, crayons of white, gold, and silver, sticky stars in various colors.

Invite the children to outline their hands on the paper and create them as a constellation in the sky.

They may wish to add all sorts of symbols and things which belong to them as a person. Then take a tour as a group and invite each person to describe their constellation.

Variation: Outline the whole body on mural paper. This takes more time but is very dramatic.

### "Sunshine" - experiences outdoors, in nature, or with movement

#### On the Road to Brementown Role Play

*From Tapestry of Faith, Wonderful Welcome, Acceptance*

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/welcome/session12/119742.shtml>

*This kind of music making can be loud. Reduce the noise by finding an outdoor spot, away from the adult service, to celebrate.*

"Now we're going to see what happened after the robbers went away. The Brementown Musicians were very happy making music in their cabin. Animals all around heard about this place and sometimes a new animal came along who wanted to join them.

Invite the children who want to take part in music-making to say what kind of animal they want to be and what instrument they want to play. Make sure they know they can simply use their voice and make their animal's sound. Once all the children who want to have joined, invite the "musicians" to prepare a concert tune. You might suggest "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or another song they all know. Allow the children to make music as they wish."

Theme Connection: When we accept our gifts, we belong to ourselves and create beautiful music from our lives together.

### Service

Create a puppet show about the difference between fitting in and belonging and share it with younger children or parents.

## Session 3

### Belonging and Not Belonging

### The Practice of Finding the Courage to Leave

#### Introduction

**Focus Question:** How can we set ourselves free when we feel we don't belong?

**Practice:** The skill of finding the courage to leave when we need to.

**Session Goal:** Begin to understand the difference between belonging and deciding to stand alone, not belonging.

**Calendar Connections:** flexible

#### Wonder Box/ Reflection

*The Idea for the Wonder Box comes from Tapestry of Faith's Wonderful Welcome by Aisha Hauser, and Christina Leone Tracy, who presented it at General Assembly.*

Prop: a needle stuck in a ball of playdough

- What's in the wonder box?
- It is a needle stuck in a ball of playdough.
- This month we are reflecting on being a people of belonging.
- Today, we are wondering about the times when we need to have the courage to leave, and not belong.
- Here's a quote:
  - Growth is painful.
  - Change is painful.
  - But nothing is as painful as staying stuck somewhere you don't belong. - Mandy Hale
- This needle is definitely staying stuck somewhere where it doesn't belong. A needle just doesn't belong in playdough.
- I think it would be much happier if it was in a place where it belonged. (place the needle in a pincushion or into a scrap of fabric, or a spool of thread.)
- How about us?
- Have there been times when you have found yourself in a place you just don't belong? (in a group of kids who are teasing someone? Among kids who are sharing their belief in Jesus Christ, in which you don't believe, In a group of kids who are buying expensive toys which you don't really need, in a group of kids who are getting ready to do something you don't want to do?)
- Have you found the courage to leave, or wished you had?
- If you are comfortable, can you share about it?
- One of the things to learn about belonging is to recognize times when we don't belong and find the courage to leave.
- It means "respecting yourself enough to walk away from what no longer serves, grows you or makes you happy." - Robert Tew

# Meditation

## Courage Meditation

Let yourself relax. Take in a nice, slow, deep breath. And then let it out. Breathe in. And out. Deep. Slow. Breathing in. And breathing out. (Pause)

And let your bodies relax. Let your muscles relax. Let your face relax. Let your mind relax. Whatever you've been carrying around with you all day that you don't need right now, let it go. Let all of you—body, mind, and spirit—deeply and fully relax. Keep breathing. (Pause)

Feel your deep inner life and the strength that is there. We know that strength can give us courage when we need it. We know that we will feel fear when we take a risk, but we know that we have deep inner strength to call upon.

We know what we must do. Take in a nice, slow, deep breath. Gather your confidence. Take in another nice, slow, deep breath, Gather your courage. Hear these words inside of you....

"I am filled with courage.

I am filled with courage.

I am filled with courage.

Dig down deep inside of yourself and feel the courage that lies within you. Feel the strength. Feel the power.

I am filled with courage.

I am filled with courage.

I am filled with courage.

Feel the courage that courses through your veins. Feel the strength that lies within you. We each have a place of strength, of power, of courage that lies within. Go deeper and deeper inside of yourself until you contact that deep well of courage that lies within you.

I am courageous.

I am courageous.

I am courageous." - adapted from <http://hayleymermelstein.blogspot.com/2012/03/i-am-filled-with-courage.html>

## Follow up the Courage Meditation

Invite their responses to the meditation. How can we open up to more courage in our lives?

## Story

*Remember you can use the video for the story if you can't find or don't have the book. Also check the For All Ages and Book Recommendation sections in this packet for ideas*

### **Nerdy Birdy (also suggested as a For All Ages Story)**

*by Aaron Reynolds*

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/Nerdy-Birdy-Aaron-Reynolds/dp/1626721270/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Nerdy+birdy&qid=1563836805&s=gateway&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Nerdy-Birdy-Aaron-Reynolds/dp/1626721270/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Nerdy+birdy&qid=1563836805&s=gateway&sr=8-1)

Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8v2L\\_4f-nek](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8v2L_4f-nek)

"My daughter is 6, wears glasses, plays Minecraft and reads novels. She doesn't always fit in with her first-grade peers. One of my pet names for her is Nerdy Bird. This book is adorable and made her feel like a book was written just for her. It's a tale not only of "finding your flock" and the group where you feel like you belong, but also being willing to go outside that comfort zone and find that friends who are much different from you also enrich your life!" - review on Amazon

Theme Message: It is lonely being alone. It's important to be a friend. It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept and celebrate those differences. We belong together.

## Activities

### **Not Fitting In Game**

We might be scared of not fitting in. This game builds a different relationship to not belonging. Here, each person comes in front of the room one at a time. After "claiming" the stage, that person shares with pride a made-up time of not fitting in and the courage to leave of theirs. Something like "I decided not to color my hair at the sleep over" is great.. Or how about "I decided not to jump into the monkey yard at the zoo when my friends did it." Once they've shared the 'not fitting in', the rest of the group gives them a wild and rousing ovation in celebration. The person on stage should take a grand and vigorous, deep "ta-da!" bow, soaking in the applause to full effect. The game finishes when everyone's had the chance to celebrate having 'not fit in and had the courage to leave.'

Insider Tips:

Make sure to explain why you're playing this game before you play it or to debrief it afterward: we're trying to create a new relationship to what we think of as not fitting in. When we have the courage to stand alone or leave, it often means we're pushing ourselves to develop new skills. It means we're taking risks. And our so-called 'failures' can lead us to possibilities we never would have imagined. That's all worth celebrating.

Adapted from <https://animalearning.com/fresh-start-10-improv-games-to-develop-courage-compassion-and-creativity/>

### **Word Art**

Write the letters for "COURAGE" vertically down a page. Invite the children to use the letters as suggestions for creating a design. Provide markers, colored pencils, or even watercolors.

## **Sunshine - connection to Nature, outdoors, or movement**

### **An Obstacle Course for Courage**

Where can you find places outside (or inside, if you don't have an outside space) where you need to use your inner resources, your courage? Can you set up an obstacle course? Create a few of these elements:

- A tunnel to crawl through made from a blanket or tarp over some chairs.
- A rope to hang and swing from.
- A balance beam to walk across.
- Stepping stones across a lava river.
- A place to climb over.

Award points for helping others, encouraging others. The point is to recognize your own inner courage, and encourage others, so that when you need it to stand alone, you know what courage feels like.

### **Service**

Invite other children to try out the Obstacle Course, and share with them the reason - to find your inner courage so that when it comes time for you to use it, you know where to find it.

# Session 4

## Belonging to Big Things

### The Practice of Opening to the Interdependent Web

#### Introduction

**Focus Question:** How do we belong to the Earth, God and the Universe?

**Practice:** The skill of celebrating awe and interconnectedness.

**Session Goal:** Begin to understand that everything belongs to each other.

**Calendar Connection:** Samhain, Halloween,

#### Wonder Box/ Reflection

*The Idea for the Wonder Box comes from Tapestry of Faith's Wonderful Welcome by Aisha Hauser, and Christina Leone Tracy, who presented it at General Assembly.*

#### Belonging to the Web

Leader Script: (say in your own words)

Wonder Box - a web: a picture of a spider web, a piece of crocheted lace, some finger weaving, or a loosely woven piece of fabric

- What is in the Wonder Box? It's a web.
- This month we are reflecting on "being a people of belonging."
- Today, we reflect on the interdependent web to which we belong.
- What does "interdependent" mean. (Depending and belonging to each other and all things)
- The sixth Unitarian Universalist principle says, "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."
- Do we really belong to an interdependent web? Think of something, like a piece of bread. How are we interdependent with a piece of bread. It's not our cousin. Or is it?
- The bread is made with flour, the flour is made from wheat, grown in soil, when we die, our atoms return to the soil - and there we are - growing up into a wheat stalk! That is pretty interdependent. Can you think of something we want to try to relate to? (save flowers for the meditation. Try a Lego. Made of plastic, comes from oil, comes from decomposing dinosaurs and plants long ago, we are made of the same carbon, calcium, iron, oxygen and hydrogen as the dinosaurs, created during star formation. Our atoms have always existed in some form in the universe and so our atoms could have been part of the oil, which instead blended with rock and became soil, which grew a mushroom, which was eaten by a mammalian mouse and became part of the web of life which became part of you and me.
- We belong to the interdependent web.

# Meditation

## Inter-being with the World by Thich Nhat Hanh

*Relax into a comfortable position. Imagine you are floating above the world. There comes the soft voice of a Buddhist monk. His name is Thich Nhat Hanh (Tik Nat Han). He is here to teach you... He says....*  
(read in a slow, gentle voice)

"... You don't have to be a poet in order to see a cloud floating in the flower, but you know very well that without the clouds there would be no rain and no water for the flower to grow. So cloud is part of flower, and if you send the element cloud back to the sky, there will be no flower. Cloud is a non-flower element. And the sunshine...you can touch the sunshine here. If you send back the element sunshine, the flower will vanish. And sunshine is another non-flower element. And earth, and gardener... if you continue, you will see a multitude of non-flower elements in the flower. In fact, a flower is made only with non-flower elements. It does not have a separate self...

The whole cosmos can be seen, can be identified, can be touched, in one flower. So to say that the flower is empty of a separate self also means that the flower is full of the cosmos. You are a manifestation of the cosmos

It's the same thing. So you are of the same nature as a flower: you are empty of a separate self, but you are full of the cosmos. You are as wonderful as the cosmos; you are a manifestation of the cosmos."

as quoted in <https://prepareforchange.net/2016/04/01/thich-nhat-hanh-on-the-interdependence-of-all-things-in-the-universe/>

## Response to Meditation

Invite the children to share they felt in the meditation.

# Story

*Check the For All Ages and Book Recommendation sections in this packet for ideas as well.*

## What is God?

*By Etan Boritzer (Author), Robbie Marantz (Illustrator)*

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/What-God-Etan-Boritzer/dp/0920668887/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=20NPAC1PIB7PA&keywords=what+is+god+by+etan+boritzer&qid=1564581466&s=books&sprefix=What+is+God%2Cstripbooks%2C168&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/What-God-Etan-Boritzer/dp/0920668887/ref=sr_1_1?crid=20NPAC1PIB7PA&keywords=what+is+god+by+etan+boritzer&qid=1564581466&s=books&sprefix=What+is+God%2Cstripbooks%2C168&sr=1-1)

"What is God? is an eloquent introduction to the ideas behind God and religion, and brings forward complex ideas in a way children will understand. It is written with a simple clarity and beautifully illustrated with just the right blend of seriousness and humor.

What is God? compares different religions -- Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism -- and their holy books, looks at misunderstandings and arguments among people of different religions, and talks about praying as well as feeling connected to everything in the world."

Theme Connection: We belong to things larger than ourselves, which some call God, Spirit of Life, Sacred Mystery, Ultimate Reality.

## Activities

### Finger Weaving the Interdependent Web to Which We All Belong

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsZsUBYU0qU>

Follow the simple directions, or ask for a volunteer who knows how to finger knit. This is a popular “kid-culture” activity, so someone usually knows how.

Make a bracelet to remind each child of the interdependent web to which we belong.

### Games from Deep Fun

#### The Interconnected Web

Materials: A large ball of yarn, scissors.

“Have the group stand in a circle. The person holding the ball of yarn begins by choosing someone across the circle to affirm. They say something nice about someone else and throw the ball, while holding on to the end of the yarn. That person catches it and chooses a new person. The process continues until everyone is holding onto part of the web. Have the group raise the web above their heads to see how neat it is. Pass around scissors so that everyone can cut a piece of the web to keep as a memento of the community or find a place to hang up the web.”

<https://www.uua.org/youth/library/adults-ministry/deepfun/affirming>

### “Sunshine” (connection with nature and our bodies)/ Movement

#### Trees that talk to each other in a “Wood Wide Web”

##### Leader Background for Exploring How and Why Trees ‘Talk’ to Each Other

Article: Ecologist Suzanne Simard has shown how trees use a network of soil fungi to communicate their needs and aid neighboring plants.

[https://e360.yale.edu/features/exploring\\_how\\_and\\_why\\_trees\\_talk\\_to\\_each\\_other](https://e360.yale.edu/features/exploring_how_and_why_trees_talk_to_each_other)

TED Talk: How trees talk to each other | Suzanne Simard (Consider watching this talk if you have older elementary children. 18 min.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un2yBgIAxYs>

Trees are communicating with one another, more than we’ve ever known before. They belong to a web of life, too. “Wise old mother trees feed their saplings with liquid sugar and warn the neighbors when danger approaches. Reckless youngsters take foolhardy risks with leaf-shedding, light-chasing and excessive drinking, and usually pay with their lives. Crown princes wait for the old monarchs to fall, so they can take their place in the full glory of sunlight. It’s all happening in the ultra-slow motion that is tree time, so that what we see is a freeze-frame of the action...”

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-whispering-trees-180968084/>

Watch the video (1:47 min) about how trees are connected by the “Wood Wide Web.” Then go outside and imagine what the Wood Wide Web might be in your neighborhood or grounds. Which trees are mother trees, which are helping saplings? Which are dying and dumping their resources?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWOqeyPIVRo>

### Service

Take watering cans or a hose on your visit to the trees and see if they could use some water.



# Youth

*Here are a variety of components for use in your Youth Groups for the month.  
Don't forget that an adult service on the theme may be a good option, as well.*

## Reflections

### **When have you heard “Welcome Home!”**

The gift of “Welcome Home” - <https://onbeing.org/blog/parker-palmer-the-gift-of-welcome-home/>

**Theme Connection:** ““Welcome” is one of the best words we can say to each other. If a person is feeling lost — as so many are — what could be better than to hear someone or something say, “Welcome home!””

### **When were you the stranger?**

When were you “the stranger” and someone invited you in? More importantly, how are you re-paying that gift in your present day living and loving?

## Meditation

### **Meditation for Belonging to Yourself**

Visit <https://yogainternational.com/article/view/guided-meditation-for-self-love> for a beautiful meditation on *Loving Yourself*.

*Let yourself relax. Take in a nice, slow, deep breath. And then let it out. Breathe in. And out. Deep. Slow. Breathing in. And breathing out. (Pause)*

*And let your bodies relax. Let your muscles relax. Let your face relax. Let your mind relax. Whatever you've been carrying around with you all day that you don't need right now, let it go. Let all of you— body, mind, and spirit—deeply and fully relax. Keep breathing. (Pause)*

*Place your hands over your heart.*

Start at the sentence:

“How does it feel to place my hands over this tender area, this place where I experience love for self and others?”

End at the sentence:

“When you're ready, take a few more deep, mindful breaths and then softly open your eyes. Sit for a few moments to acknowledge the unique experience you had during this meditation.

This is a beautiful opportunity to learn something new about yourself and tune into your physical and emotional needs. Let self-love enable you to build a stronger relationship with yourself and allow you to show up more fully in your life.”

## Activities

### Skit

#### **Startull, the Story of an Average, Yellow Star**

*Skit From Connie Barlow of The Great Story.org*

<http://www.thegreatstory.org/stardust-parable.pdf>

Skit for reading in 2 acts.

Theme Message: We belong to the great circle of life and death.

### Videos

TED Talk: The Spirit of the Village by Jacky Yenga

[https://youtu.be/5EBx4H\\_cgww?t=107](https://youtu.be/5EBx4H_cgww?t=107) (min. 1:17 - 7:00)

Theme Connection: What it was like for her to move from an interconnected village in Cameron, to the Western world of Paris.

#### **Finger Weaving the Interdependent Web to Which We All Belong**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsZsUBYU0qU>

Follow the simple directions or ask for a volunteer who knows how to finger knit. Make a bracelet to remind each person of the interdependent web to which we belong.

## Service

### **An Obstacle Course for Courage**

Set up an obstacle course for the younger kids. . Where can you find places outside (or inside, if you don't have an outside space) where they need to use their inner resources, their courage? Create a few of these elements:

- A tunnel to crawl through made from a blanket or tarp over some chairs.
- A rope to hang and swing from.
- A balance beam to walk across.
- Stepping stones across a lava river.
- A place to climb over.

Award points for helping others, encouraging others. The goal is to help them recognize their own inner courage, and encourage others, so that when they need it to stand alone, they know what courage feels like.

# Family and Parent Resources

*These resources help parents as they engage the question: "What does it mean to be a family of belonging?" In addition to families using them at home, you might also use them to engage parents collectively, for instance in a Parent Circle that meets on Sunday afternoon or mid-week.*

## With Your Kids

(Ideas to engage belonging as a Family)

### Stories To Read Together

#### **Blubber (recommended for older elementary)**

by Judy Blume (Author)

Book: [https://www.amazon.com/Blubber-Judy-Blume/dp/148141013X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=2IJWWDHFYP0E1&keywords=blubber+by+judy+blume&qid=1564497893&s=books&srefix=Blubber+%2Cstripbooks%2C167&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Blubber-Judy-Blume/dp/148141013X/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2IJWWDHFYP0E1&keywords=blubber+by+judy+blume&qid=1564497893&s=books&srefix=Blubber+%2Cstripbooks%2C167&sr=1-1)

"This book is narrated by Jill Brenner, a lively fifth-grader. Linda, one of her classmates, gets stuck with the nickname "Blubber" after she gives a science report on whales, even though she is not the fattest kid in the class. Led by Wendy, the nasty class "leader", the kids make Linda's life miserable-and eventually the taunting escalates into actual violence. Jill joins in-although not wholeheartedly-and the climax of the story occurs when she is forced to choose between hurting Linda and doing the right thing. This is an excellently crafted story. Ms. Blume accurately catches the speech patterns and actions of everyday kids, and she also creates a counterweight to the disturbing aspects of this story with scenes from Jill's life. These chapters are very funny; and they are filled with memorable characters. These vignettes keep the story from becoming relentlessly depressing.." - review on Amazon

Theme Connection: Understanding bullying, teasing, and empathy. Bullying is a heartless way to make kids feel they don't belong.

## Family Discoveries

#### **More Than Bows and Arrows**

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDICZu12wDQ>

Watch this together for Indigenous Peoples Day, Oct. 8. It is a bit dated, but it underlines how we need many voices to make a history that is whole.

"Discover the many contributions of native peoples to the development of the United States and Canada. Indian inventions such as sunglasses, snowshoes, and rubber have changed the world! From cliff dwellings and ancient cities to over 200,000 prehistoric earthen mounds that rival the pyramids of Egypt...from early mines to medicine men...to astronomical observatories and Hohokam irrigation canal systems, here is an uncommon and unequalled story narrated by N. Scott Momaday, Pulitzer prize winning author."

Theme Connection: So many parts of history have been ignored and warped. When we find out more about the marginalized peoples, like the North American Indigenous Peoples, we realize how much more we need to learn to become whole.

### **Invite a Friend Home after Church**

In my (Katie's) childhood, we made it a practice to invite children home to our house from whatever UU church we belonged to. That way we got to know each other better and make friends.

"In the mid-60's, we belonged to Kanawha Valley Fellowship, now the UU Congregation of Charleston, W.V. We used to bring friends home to play with us, my sister and I, in 2nd and 4th grade. One of our friends was Meg Riley, now the Rev. Meg Riley of Church of the Larger Fellowship. My mother remembers that Meg didn't like spaghetti much and so Mom always had a can of chicken noodle soup ready for Meg's lunch. The UU Fellowship provided a lifeline for our young family which moved around a lot. We felt we belonged."

Invite a friend home after your church service!

Theme Connection: When belong to ourselves, we know ourselves and can welcome the stranger.

## **Family Movie Night Ideas**

### **Odd Squad: The Movie (G)**

<https://www.common sense media.org/movie-reviews/odd-squad-the-movie>

Theme Connection: Belonging to yourself and celebrating teamwork.

## **For You**

**(Support for Parents as Faith Formation Guides)**

### **Helping Kids Cope with Cliques**

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/cliques.html>

"How Can Parents Help?"

As kids navigate friendships and cliques, there's plenty parents can do to offer support. If your child seems upset, or suddenly spends time alone when usually very social, ask about it. Here are some tips:

- Talk about your own experiences. Share your own experiences of school — cliques have been around for a long time!
- Help put rejection in perspective. Remind your child of times he or she has been angry with parents, friends, or siblings — and how quickly things can change.
- Shed some light on social dynamics. Acknowledge that people are often judged by the way a person looks, acts, or dresses, but that often people act mean and put others down because they lack self-confidence and try to cover it up by maintaining control.
- Find stories they can relate to. Many books, TV shows, and movies portray outsiders triumphing in the face of rejection and send strong messages about the importance of being true to your own nature and the value of being a good friend, even in the face of difficult social situations.
- Foster out-of-school friendships. Get kids involved in extracurricular activities (if they aren't already) — art class, sports, martial arts, horse riding, language study — any activity that gives them an opportunity to create another social group and learn new skills.

## **Soulful Home Family Guides**

Explore the themes at home with your family by subscribing to our monthly parent guides, **Soulful Home**. Here's the link to the Soulful Home page on our website:

<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/soulful-home-for-families.html>

# Opportunities for Support and Connection

*Come play and think together!*

## August and September Online Zoom Labs

All Labs take place on Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/5857099120>

Audio only: Dial: +1 408 638 0968 (US Toll) or +1 646 558 8656 (US Toll) Meeting ID: 585 709 9120

### **RE Packet Brainstorming Labs**

*First Wednesday of the Month at 1 pm ET. Brainstorm on the upcoming theme 2 months away.*

Brainstorm October's RE packet on Belonging.

Wednesday, August 7, 2019, 1 p.m. Eastern Time

Brainstorm November's RE packet on Attention.

Wednesday, September 4, 2019, 1 p.m. Eastern Time

### **RE Leader Implementation Labs**

*Second Wednesday of each month at 1 pm Eastern. Katie's overview of the packet on the next month's theme. Structured sharing of challenges, opportunities, and take-aways on ideas for the theme. These Labs will be recorded and posted on the YouTube Soul Matters Channel at*

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCe2pmT\\_ATh-pbkjF2m7rfOA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCe2pmT_ATh-pbkjF2m7rfOA)

Overview and Share on the theme of Expectation - August Meeting: Wednesday, Aug 14, 1 p.m. Eastern Time

Overview and Share on the theme of Belonging - Sept. Meeting: Wednesday, Sept. 11, 1 p.m. Eastern Time

## Share Your Ideas for the Monthly Packets!

Remember that that packet creation is a collaborative effort. We will reach out to you each month by email and Facebook to solicit your ideas for our monthly packets. But you don't have to wait for those invitations. If you come across something that would be great for any of our upcoming themes, send it our way anytime at [soulmattersre@gmail.com](mailto:soulmattersre@gmail.com)

**September:** Expectation

**October:** Belonging

**November:** Attention

**December:** Awe

**January:** Integrity

**February:** Resilience

**March:** Wisdom

**April:** Liberation

**May:** Thresholds

**June:** Play

## Other Resources and Sources of Support

### RE Leader Facebook Page

Don't forget about our RE Leader Support Facebook page. Here is where our colleagues post bulletin board pictures, share books, and ideas. It's a great ongoing source of support. Your colleagues are available to support you at the click of a button and with the ease of a post:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/545202255591601/>

### Pinterest Page

Check out the Pinterest page on Belonging. Images and links to the books, videos, activities and more as mentioned in this packet.

<https://www.pinterest.com/soulmattersre/2019-belonging-october/>

### Inspiration Facebook Page

Offer your teachers and parents spiritual nourishment and inspiration by encouraging them to join the Soul Matters Inspiration Facebook Page. Use the memes for your congregational FB page, as well:

<https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

### Soul Matters Spotify Music Playlists:

Discover musical inspiration on each of our monthly themes through our playlists:

<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/spotify-lists.html>

### Soulful Home Family Guides:

Invite your parents to explore the themes at home with their family by subscribing to our monthly parent guides, **Soulful Home**. Here's the link to the Soulful Home page on our website:

<https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/soulful-home.html>.

There are three types of subscriptions: congregational, family and gift subscriptions. Check out them all! If you don't purchase a congregational subscription, consider sharing the link in your church newsletter or the weekly emails you send to parents.

Here's [a link](#) to a PDF flyer you can post on your bulletin boards or hand out to new families.

## Related Resources from Katie Covey

*Katie creates curriculum distinct from Soul Matters. You can learn more about all she offers at [www.uure.com](http://www.uure.com). If you have purchased her curriculum, here are sessions from them that relate to the theme of Belonging,*

### **Elementary Ages** **From Spirit of Adventure:**

Session #10- Food - Stone Soup Sunday  
Session #35 - Web of Life - Blessing of the Animals

### **From Picture Book UU:**

Session #4 - Owen and Mzee  
Session #7 - Stone Soup

### **From Picture Book Bible Tales**

Session #3- The Story of Cain and Abel  
Session #4 - Noah

### **From Picture Book World Religions**

Session #4- Hinduism - Lighting a Lamp (Diwali)  
Session #13 - Buddhism - The Mountains of Tibet

### **For Youth** **From Lodestone, Magnetize Your Middle School**

UU Unit  
    Session #UU5 - Heresy Sunday  
Race Unit (Free download!)  
    Session #R1 - The Danger of a Single Story  
Money Unit  
    Session #M4 - Money and Values  
Death Unit  
    Session #D3 - Death Clarifies Life  
Social Nights  
    October - A Scary Stories Evening

## ***Soul Matters RE Packet Author and Support Team:***

***Packet Author: Katie Covey, Soul Matters Director of Religious Education***

Special thanks to all the Soul Matters Religious Educators who send in suggestions for our monthly packets and participate in our monthly packet brainstorming calls.

Thanks also to the other [Soul Matter Team](#) members who contribute to the content and shape of these packets:

Rev. Michelle Collins, Soul Matters Small Group & Special Projects Researcher  
Rev. Scott Tayler, Soul Matters Team Lead



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