



Soul Matters

What does it mean to be a
people of BLESSING?



RE Resources

June 2018

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Welcome

Welcome to the Soul Matters RE Packet for June's theme of "What Does It Mean to be a People of Blessing?"

We UU's are a people of blessing because of our belief that each of us is able to bless and each of us is worthy to receive blessings.

This lens brought the whole month into focus.

Viewed through the lens of blessing, the Flower Communion becomes a UU Service of Blessing. We bless the flowers with our awareness. We bless each other with our simple message of diversity. We bless and heal each other and the world. This is the beauty of thematic ministry, the new angles which give our rituals life. There are several elements for the Flower Communion which I had never heard of. I hope some of the elements are new to you, too, as we steep ourselves in this uniquely UU ritual of blessing.

The lens of "Blessing" gave me a way to cover the celebration of Ramadan. The Muslims call the imperative to fast, a "blessing," and give thanks for the extra time to concentrate on helping the needy and studying the Quran. They understand that hardship can liberate us into blessing.

The lens of "Blessing" gave me a way of recognizing the fight for racial justice and covering Juneteenth. It is hard, important work AND ALSO a blessing and joy to celebrate the rainbow of skin tones we are. It is a blessing and joy to celebrate the final reading emancipating the enslaved Africans in Texas. What a blessing that we can support the celebration of Juneteenth.

The lens of "Blessing" gave me a way to into the celebration of senses as blessings. We take our senses for granted. How beautiful and joyful they can be when we understand them as blessings. As Kurt Vonnegut writes in "Cat's Cradle:"

There was a message written in pencil on the tiles by the roller towel.

This was it: What is the purpose of life?...

To be the eyes, and ears and conscience of the Creator of the Universe, you fool.

With this diverse understanding of Blessing in mind, we invite you to explore being a people of Blessing. We offer you this song called [GRATEFUL: A Love Song to the World](#) as a way to say thank you for all you have given us. It has been a blessing and a gift to share this year with you.

Katie, on behalf of the entire Soul Matters Team

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Calendar Connections

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

Interfaith

- [Ramadan](#) (Islam) - May 15 - June 14 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Eid al Fitr](#) (Islam) - June 14 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Solstice, Litha](#) (Wicca/Pagan) - June 21 (more [here](#))

Unitarian Universalist

- Norbert Capek celebrates first [Flower Communion](#) (1923) - June 4
- [Olympia Brown](#) was ordained (1853) - June 25

National & Cultural Holidays

- [LGBT Pride Month](#)
- Anniversary of the [Pulse Nightclub shooting](#) in Orlando - June 12
- [Father's Day](#) - June 18
- [Juneteenth](#) Emancipation Celebration - June 19 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [World Refugee Day](#) - June 20 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Stonewall Riot](#) - June 28 (more [here](#) and [here](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe

- Celebration of [Senses Day](#) - June 24 (more [here](#) and [here](#))

Stories for all Ages

One Flower in a Field

From *Tapestry of Faith, Gather the Spirit, Workshop 3*.

Adapted from "One Flower in a Field" by Joshua Searle-White, in *Magic Wanda's Travel Emporium: Tales of Love, Hate and Things in Between* (Boston: Skinner House, 2007).

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/gather/workshop3/149485.shtml>

"...how could these flowers grow when the field was so dry? The answer is that next to each flower was a hole in the ground. And in each hole lived an animal whose job it was to tend that flower." Tell this with flowers as a prop, plus a stuffed rabbit. A story for Flower Communion or working for Justice, such as how each of us are able to bless the world.

The Dog at the Well, a Muslim tale

From *Tapestry of Faith, Gather the Spirit, Workshop 7*.

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/gather/workshop7/149663.shtml>

"...When he was on the ground again, he knelt and opened the boots so the dog could drink. The dog drank all the water in both boots, his tail wagging happily. The man smiled. "Now neither of us will die of thirst," he said. He pulled on his damp boots, patted the dog again, and continued on his way. Allah was pleased by this kind act. He was so pleased that all the man's past sins were forgiven, and years later, when the kind man died, his soul was taken to heaven. The blessed prophet Muhammad concluded his story by saying, "You too will be rewarded for being good to all living creatures." Prop: a bowl of water to cup your hands in and drink.

The Gates of the Forest, a Jewish tale

From *Tapestry of Faith, Spirit of Life, Workshop 2*.

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/life/workshop2/159144.shtml>

How do we ask for a blessing as UU's? Tell this story from the Jewish tradition about how prayer and ritual is a matter of sincerity. In the end, we tell the story, and receive the blessing. Sharing our stories with each other is the blessing of community.

Mullah Nasruddin Feeds His Coat (Ramadan)

From *Tapestry of Faith, Moral Tales, Session 6*.

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/tales/session6/123344.shtml>

Adapted from a Middle Eastern Islamic folk tale which is attributed to different countries, including Turkey and Syria. Tell the story and put on an old coat then change to a new coat.

"The Wise Sailimai: A Tale from China"

in *"Ayat Jamilah: Beautiful Signs; A Treasury of Islamic Wisdom for Children and Parents"* by Sarah Conover and Freda Crane

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/lovesurrounds/session1/wise-sailimai>

The true blessings of the heart. This version suggests some participatory roles for the telling.

Count Your Blessings - A Jewish Tale

<https://thecaregiverspace.org/the-secret-to-counting-your-blessings-a-jewish-story/>

"A beautiful Yiddish story about a man who lived in a one-room hut with his mother, his wife, and six children. The hut, as we can imagine, was filled with crying and quarreling. It was noisy and hard to live. One day, when he felt he couldn't take it anymore, the man went to his rabbi..." from the blog. Enact this story by outlining a small hut with tape on the floor or chairs and inviting children and adults to take roles as family members. Then invite up volunteers to be the chicken, goat, and cow.

Count Your Blessings - A tale about watermelons

<http://www.beliefnet.com/inspiration/inspired-faith/may-you-be-blessed/count-your-blessings.aspx>

A little girl harvests watermelons with her uncles, then remembers them as a woman, when she sees them in the grocery store. Tell this with a watermelon!

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.*

Spirit of Life STLT #123

Notice the number of this hymn, #123. If we were mystics, there would be significance in the 1-2-3 for our most beloved song. It gives us the beginning of our spirituality.

Excerpted from Carolyn McDade's spirit of life; Unitarian Universalism's most beloved song, the woman who wrote it, and the communities that sustain her spirit. UU World KIMBERLY FRENCH FALL 2007

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcFZ32EHexY>

"Like much of McDade's music, the genesis of "Spirit of Life" was a very personal one. Late one night in the early 1980s, she was driving her close friend Pat Simon home from one of those meetings. In UU tellings of the story, it has been called a church social-justice meeting, an anti-nuclear-power demonstration, and a remembrance of Harvey Milk, the openly gay San Francisco city supervisor who was assassinated in 1978—versions that may work well to make a sermon point. But McDade says it was a meeting for Central American solidarity, probably at a college.

What she remembers most clearly was the feeling she had. "When I got to Pat's house, I told her, 'I feel like a piece of dried cardboard that has lain in the attic for years. Just open wide the door, and I'll be dust.' I was tired, not with my community but with the world. She just sat with me, and I loved her for sitting with me."

McDade then drove to her own home in Newtonville. "I walked through my house in the dark, found my piano, and that was my prayer: May I not drop out. It was not written but prayed. I knew more than anything that I wanted to continue in faith with the movement."

She shared the song with the community of women she organized and sang with, as she still does with all her songs. A handwritten version, with just a melody line, appeared in the songbook she used for years.

Then in the early 1990s the UUA hymnbook commission approached McDade about including her song in *Singing the Living Tradition*. She was reluctant. “I thought of it as a living prayer, not a hymn,” she says. “I don’t feel like a hymn writer.”

McDade was not even aware of how widely or for how long UUs had been singing the song in their churches, copying it from gathering to gathering, without getting permission or paying the songwriter. They loved it.

“Among ourselves,” recalls the Rev. Mark Belletini, who chaired the commission, “we thought, if we don’t put ‘Spirit of Life’ in the book, we’ll all be killed. We took her hesitation very seriously and wanted to address it.” They agreed to place the song (hymn 123) under the “Love and Compassion” heading rather than “Worship.”

Book Recommendations

Oskar and the Eight Blessings

by Tanya Simon (Author), Richard Simon (Author), Mark Siegel (Illustrator)

Book: <https://www.amazon.com/Oskar-Eight-Blessings-Tanya-Simon/dp/1596439491>

Video trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtkCb2R4Ur4>

“Even in bad times, people can be good. You have to look for blessings” - a story from 1938. Even though it takes place around winter holidays, the random acts of kindness which bless him are universal.

The Keeping Quilt

by Patricia Polacco (Author, Illustrator)

Book: https://www.amazon.com/Keeping-Quilt-Patricia-Polacco/dp/0689844476/ref=sr_1_11?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1521588011&sr=1-11&keywords=childrens+books+on+blessings

The Author tells the story: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9JZW_KuH9A

A good story for Child Dedications. Invite congregants who quilt to add their quilts for the decor. The blessings of the past and the future.

The Blessing Cup

by Patricia Polacco (Author, Illustrator)

Book:

https://www.amazon.com/Blessing-Cup-Paula-Wiseman-Books/dp/1442450479/ref=sr_1_56?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1521588912&sr=1-56&keywords=childrens+books+on+blessings

“A bond of love unites a family throughout generations in this companion to the beloved and bestselling classic The Keeping Quilt.

As a young Russian Jewish girl in the early 1900s, Anna and her family lived in fear of the Czar’s soldiers. The family lived a hard life and had few possessions—their treasure was a beautiful china tea set. A wedding gift to Anna’s parents, the tea set came with a wish that “Anyone who drinks from this will have blessings from God. They will never know a day of hunger. Their lives will always have flavor. They will know love and joy and they will never be poor.” - Amazon.

A story about persecution in the Pogroms in Russia as well as the blessings of heritage. Good for reflection on all marginalized peoples.

My Name Is Blessing

by Eric Walters (Author), Eugenie Fernandes (Illustrator)

https://www.amazon.com/My-Name-Blessing-Eric-Walters/dp/1770493018/ref=sr_1_60?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1521589516&sr=1-60&keywords=childrens+books+on+blessings

“Based on the life of a real boy, this warm-hearted, beautifully illustrated book tells the story of Baraka, a young Kenyan boy with a physical disability. Baraka and eight cousins live with their grandmother. She gives them boundless love, but there is never enough money or food, and life is hard --love doesn't feed hungry stomachs or clothe growing bodies, or school keen minds. Baraka is too young, and, with his disability, needs too much, and she is too old. A difficult choice must be made, and grandmother and

grandchild set off on a journey to see if there is a place at the orphanage for Baraka. The story begins by looking at Baraka's physical disability as a misfortune, but ends by looking beyond the disability, to his great heart and spirit, and the blessings he brings.' - Amazon

A Bucket of Blessings

by Kabir Sehgal (Author), Surishtha Sehgal (Author), Jing Jing Tsong (Illustrator), Maya Angelou (Afterword)

Book: https://www.amazon.com/Bucket-Blessings-Kabir-Sehgal/dp/1442458704/ref=sr_1_72?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1521590116&sr=1-72&keywords=childrens+books+on+blessings

It is a blessing to be a blessing. A New York Times award winning book of a folktale from India.

Sessions

Session 1

Our Faith's Call to Notice and Share the Blessings of Beauty: A Multigenerational Flower Communion, June 4

Young Children (P - K)

If you are offering a Multigenerational service, some families appreciate the opportunity for their young children to join the Preschool instead of staying for the Multigenerational Service. It is nice to invite families to choose their option, based on their child(ren)'s temperament.

Wonder Box

Place inside: a flower

What is in the wonder box? It is a flower! Today is the Flower Communion/Service/Ceremony. Everyone shares a flower and takes a different one home. It is a special service we do as Unitarian Universalists. We look at the flower to see how beautiful it is. Look closely. What color is it? Some flowers grow in fields, some from a garden. Each of you is like a flower, so beautiful and so different from each other. *(pick up another flower and place them side by side)*

Each flower is different. How are they different? How are you different from each other? We can use the flower to bless each person by tapping gently on the top of the head. Who would like a flower blessing? It is like a flower kiss!

(Bless each child who wishes)

We wish the best for each person, and that is called "Blessing." The theme this month at our church (congregation) is Blessing. We can bless each other with a kiss, a smile or a hug if someone wants a blessing from us.

Resources

Preschool Flower Communion

From Tapestry of Faith, Chalice Children, Special Services

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/chalicechildren/session16>

Books, ceremony and resources for a Preschool version of the Flower Ceremony.

Fingerplays

Flowers Tall and Small

Flowers tall, (let tall fingers stand up)

Flowers small, (let little finger and thumb stand up)

Count them one by one,

Blowing with the breezes

In the springtime sun!

1,2,3,4,5 (touch each finger as you count)

Songs

Ring around the Rosie

<http://www.nurseryrhymes.org/ring-a-ring-o-roses-ring-around-the-rosie.html>

Each of Us is a Flower

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIIINroH6ai0>

Use the chorus only if you'd like to keep it simple.

Video

Dandelion Life Cycle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQsfedMrjs8>

“Sunshine” (connection with nature and our bodies)

Looking for Dandelions or other flowers

This is one service to be sure to enjoy some sunshine and nature time, if possible. Can the children find dandelions? Can they identify which part of the life cycle the dandelions are in? What other flowers can they find?

Can they touch flowers gently without breaking them?

Do they see any insects or bees drinking nectar?

Service

Invite the children to give a drink to their flower by putting it in a vase or wrapping the stem in a damp paper towel. What other plants can they find who might like a drink? Indoors or out.

Multigenerational Flower Communion Elements

Here are a variety of elements for crafting a service for all ages to share, using the theme of “How are we a people of blessing?” as well as traditional Flower Communion elements. I have collected these to provide some new and some traditional Flower Service elements.

Centerpiece/Art - Sunflowers

In your explanation of the sunflower, you may wish to note the metaphor of sunflowers as turning their flower heads to follow the sun. Just as the sunflowers follow the sun, so may we follow the blessings which give us life.

“The sunflower is the Czech national flower. The Flower Communion Service originated there in the years of the Czechoslovak Republic before the Second World War. Rev. Dr. Norbert Capek, (pronounced “Chappek”) ...turned to the native beauty of their countryside for elements of a new communion, which would be genuine to them. It became one of their most significant services and was soon introduced in other Unitarian congregations.” from Flower Communion UK Unitarians
https://www.unitarian.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/files/Documents/Worship_Pack/2008_Flowers_WorshipPack.pdf

Description of Capek’s Flower Ceremony for Children

From Tapestry of Faith, Love Surrounds Us, Session 7

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/lovesurrounds/session7/flower-ceremony>

Coloring Page

Flower Ceremony Doodle

By Rev. Cynthia Landrum

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/image/flower-ceremony-doodle>

Meditation or Prayer

The original words by Rev. Dr. Norbert Capek

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/27761.shtml>

Homily

Flower Power

By Rev. Gary Kowalski

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/homily/flower-power>

Remembering Practice

The service leader sets aside one flower to remember those who are a part of the community but not able to be present, whether through travels, loss, infirmity or illness. Some congregations deliver flowers to those unable to attend.

Songs

Aj, Lucka, Siroka - Czech Folk Song

From The Communion Book by Carl Seaborg (ed.) pg. 158

Video: Sung by the Yale Whiffenpoofs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygWQYId9DXk>

“Thomas Masaryk, the founder and first president of Czechoslovakia, was married to Charlotte Garrigue of the Brooklyn Heights Unitarian Church. The special association of the Brooklyn church with the Masaryk family through the years lends additional significance to their celebration of the Flower Communion...

All join in singing the Czech folk song “Aj Lucka,” as best they can in the original language. [This would be a good song to project with the phonetic syllables]. The English Translation is given merely to let them know what they are singing.”

Aj luchk-a luchk-a ka
Ros-te na-ni tra-va
Rose-te Na-ni tra-va
Aj luchk-a luchk-a shi-ro-ka

(refrain)
Te-che vo-daz ho-ra
Chis-ta je ja-ko ja
To-chi se do-k0-la
O-ko-lo ja-vo-ra

Te-che vo-daz ho-ra
Chis-ta ja-ko-la
To-chi se o-ko-la
O-ko-lo mna.

English Translation
Oh meadow, meadow, wide and broad,
Grass is growing in it.
Grass is growing in it.
Oh, meadow, meadow, wide and broad,
Grass is growing in it,
High and tall.

(refrain)
From off the mountain flows
Water as pure as I.
Swirling, it moves around,
Around the maple tree.

From off the mountain flows
Water as pure as I
Swirling, it moves around,
Flows around me.

From the UUA

Flower Ceremony Page

<https://www.uua.org/worship/holidays/flower-ceremony>

From Capek's Original 1923 Blessing of the Flowers

From The Communion Book by Carl Seaburg (ed.) pg. 152

Leader:

In the name of the Providence which implants in the heart of the seed the future of the flower, and which implants in our hearts that unrest which will not be quenched till people live lovingly with each other, we bless these flowers.

In the name of the Highest, in which we move and take our being, and in the name of the Deepest, which makes father and mother, sister and brother, lover and loner who they are, we bless these flowers.

Leader:

In the name of the prophets and sages who sacrificed their lives to hasten the coming of the reign of mutual respect, we bless these flowers.

Let us renew our resolution, sincerely, to be brothers and sisters regardless of the barriers which estrange.

Leader:

May these flowers be for us the sign of the glory and variety to which we aspire, knowing the whole while that we are One Family, the Family of Spirit and Nature.

Unison:

In this holy resolve may we be strengthened by the spirit of love, that we ourselves may bloom, bloom in splendor of a joyful life, and endeavor to be ever more perfect in our days. Amen.
(adapted by Janne and Robert Eller-Isaacs)

Creating a Flower Chalice Centerpiece

This idea was shared with me by Revs. Bob and Makannah Morriss when they served the UU Congregation in Cheyenne, WY.

Instead of simply placing flowers in vases, Bob created a plywood chalice, painted green and with braces so that it could stand vertically. He covered it with chicken wire, so that when flowers arrived, the people could gently insert the stems in the chicken wire. The leaders helped place the flowers until the chalice form was filled and the flowers covered the plywood. A Flower Chalice!

The Beatitudes for a Flower Communion Blessing

If we celebrate our uniqueness like flowers, the Beatitudes of Jesus are an appropriate reminder of our blessedness.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatitudes>

Healing and Peace Greeting

From An Abraxas Communion in "The Communion Book" by Carl Seaburg (ed.)

Healing

Leader:

The mystery is that we are connected,
Even when we feel apart:
Let us make word and deed one now,
As we remember the ancient words...

"If you are bringing your gifts to the altar,
And there remember
That your neighbor has something against you,
Leave your gift there before the altar and go your way.
First be reconciled with your neighbor,
And then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5)

Peace Greeting

A time to greet your neighbor in peace, with a handclasp, words or embrace, as appropriate.

Sing-able Songs for all ages for Flower Communion

For the Beauty of the Earth STLT #21

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QR7XGDep5mk>

Mother Spirit, Father Spirit STLT #8

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiQsSj_vDpQ&t=23s

De Colores STLT #305

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XIT577NTyk>

Spirit of Life STLT #123

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcFZ32EHexY>

I Know This Rose Will Open STLT #396

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSckK_CFn1o

Where Have All the Flowers Gone

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNp_pimVpLg

The Garden Song (Inch by Inch) as sung by Pete Seeger and others

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3FkaN0HQgs>

Scripts for Flower Communion and Blessing

A Warm Fuzzy Flower Communion by Rev. Greg Ward

http://uuintergenerational.org/warm_fuzzies.htm

Old Turtle and the Broken Truth by Douglas Wood

Adapted for the service by Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray,

Laura Goist and Susan Miracle

http://uuintergenerational.org/old_turtle.htm

Celebration of Flower Names

Adapted from Mark Belletini's Celebrating Good Gifts Communion Service in "The Communion Book" by Carl Seaburg (ed.) pg. 387

Leader:

We pause at this season to speak our gladness aloud,

And to sigh our gratitude for all good things

That are beyond the power of our making.

I invite you to speak aloud into our community,

The name of your flower

That we may bless them with our awareness.

[Congregants say the name of their flower in popcorn style - rose, daisy, lily, etc.]

Leader:

We are thankful for the flowers and each other,

for our capacity to say "I am."

And we are glad for all that becomes more than what it was

When it began, more than what it is now.

Blessing

Video: GRATEFUL: A Love Song to the World | Empty Hands Music | nimo feat. daniel nahmodl

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO2o98Zpzg8>

Be the Blessing You Are

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/ritual-prayer/be-blessing-you-already-are>

By John Gibb Millspaugh, Sarah Gibb Millspaugh

Service Leader: In our religious tradition, it is not just ministers and religious professionals who have power to bless. Each of us has the power to bless another, and to bless the world. Therefore, I invite everyone here to participate in this blessing. The words are ordinary words, but we make the blessing real through our shared intention.

[Invite congregants form physical connections, hand-to-hand or hand-to-shoulder, throughout the congregation.]

All: As we have been blessed, so we bless one another to be a blessing. Breathe in, breathe out, this breath we share with all that breathes. Feel the love of the universe flowing through this community, into you, and out into the universe again. Let the love of all the universe—your love—flow outward, to its height, its depth, its broad extent. You are more than you know, and more beloved than you know. Take up what power is yours to create safe haven, to make of earth a heaven. Give hope to those you encounter, that they may know safety from inner and outer harm, be happy and at peace, healthy and strong, caring and joyful. Be the blessing you already are. That is enough. Blessed Be; Amen.

Adapted from the Karaniya Metta Sutta (Sunna Nipata 1.8) of the Pali Canon

“Sunshine” (connection with nature and our bodies)

Blessing the World - An Outdoor Element for the Flower Communion

The Flower Communion is an obvious choice for an outdoor service. If you are unable to hold the service outdoors, what about incorporating an element of the outdoors similar to the way the Buddhist monks finish their mandala making?

Construction and Destruction of a Mandala

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10084L3Pqsc> (3:30 - 4:44)

The sand mandala is destroyed and then thrown into the river as a blessing to the world.

What if each person took a different flower, then all processed outdoors to offer their flower as a blessing to the world by creating an outdoor collage in a special place? A bush, or around a tree or around the sign, or a fountain?

Service

Carrying the flower as a blessing into the world

Extend the idea of carrying of the flowers outdoors to sharing with the nearby neighbors to the facility, or inviting congregants to share their flowers with others who they encounter as they make their way home. This means congregants take theirs with them instead of leaving them outdoors. Imagine a waitress receiving a flower while a family visits their favorite restaurant, or the homeless man on the corner, or your neighbor whom you have only met once. How will you bless the world?

Session 2

Blessing and Ramadan (May 15 - June 14)

Young Children (P - K)

Wonder Box

Place inside: a date

I wonder what is in the box... (pull out the date) Here is a date! Has anyone ever tried a date? They are sweet! They grow on Palm Trees. I wonder why there is a date in the Wonder Box? There is a date in the wonder box because dates are a special food for a holiday today. It is Ramadan today, and we want to learn about Ramadan. Can you say it? Ramadan.

The religion which celebrates Ramadan is called Islam. The people are called Muslims. The Muslims' religion is Islam just like our religion is Unitarian Universalism. During Ramadan, Muslims do not eat during the day. This is called a fast. Then, at sunset, they eat a meal. The very first food they eat is a date. "This tradition is rooted in religious teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, who is quoted as saying: "When one of you is fasting, he should break his fast with dates; but if he cannot get any, then (he should break his fast) with water, for water is purifying." - <https://www.thespruce.com/islamic-tradition-breaking-fast-with-dates-2394244>

Our theme for the month is "Blessing." We are thinking about what blessing means. The holiday of Ramadan is a special blessing for Muslims.

Stories

Night of the Moon; a Muslim Holiday Story

By Hena Khan, ill. By Julie Paschkis

<https://www.amazon.com/Night-Moon-Muslim-Holiday-Story/dp/0811860620>

Yasmeen, a seven-year-old Pakistani-American girl, celebrates the Muslim holidays of Ramadan, "The Night of the Moon" (Chaand Raat), and Eid. With lush illustrations that evoke Islamic art, this beautiful story offers a window into modern Muslim culture—and into the ancient roots from within its traditions have grown.

Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns; A Muslim Book of Colors

By Hena Khan, ill by Mahrdoxht Amini

https://www.amazon.com/Golden-Domes-Silver-Lanterns-Muslim/dp/1452141215/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1521490257&sr=1-1&keywords=golden+domes+and+silver+lanterns+a+muslim+book+of+colors

Islam for young children.

Its Ramadan, Curious George!

By H.A. Rey, Hena Khan

Book: <https://www.amazon.com/Its-Ramadan-Curious-George-Rey/dp/0544652266>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TqSGQbF3Yo>

It's the first day of Ramadan, and George is celebrating with his friend Kareem and his family. George helps Kareem with his first fast and joins in the evening celebration of tasting treats and enjoying a

special meal. Then, George helps make gift baskets to donate to the needy, and watches for the crescent moon with the man in the yellow hat. Finally, George joins in the Eid festivities to mark the end of his very first Ramadan.

Mindfulness

Say something like this:

Ring the bell. We put our hands on our hearts and feel the beating. Can you feel it? We breathe in love and breathe out peace. Our breath is coming out of us. It is emerging from us. We let it go.

Offer the following simple Meditation.

May I be happy. May I be peaceful. May I be free.

May you be happy. May you be peaceful. May you be free.

May we be happy. May we be peaceful. May we be free.

This is what we wish for the people who we love.

Ring the bell to signal the end of the mindfulness.

Songs and Fingerplays

Ramadan is based on the Islamic lunar calendar

Moon, Moon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuZ3M7UghIM>

Moon Game

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/528821181224174014/>

Food

Eat Dates

Offer pitted dates to everyone to try.

Or

Make Coconut Date Bites (watch out for nut allergies)

<https://www.deliciousmeetshealthy.com/no-bake-coconut-date-bites/>

Arts and Crafts

Puffy Paint Moon Craft

<https://www.notimeforflashcards.com/2009/05/lunar-landing.html>

Movement

Make a Giant Happy Ramadan Card

"You need a large sheet of newspaper print to cover a table and music from CD."

Try Bismillah found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kdt-miOhGwI>

"Allow the children to walk around the table with marker or crayon in hand, making movements on the paper to the beat of the music. ... Combines art, music, and movement together. Ask children to draw what the music sounds like!" <https://perpetualpreschool.com/music-and-movement-activities/>
When the parent(s) are picking up their children, play the music and invite them to look at the Giant Card the children have created.

"Sunshine" (connection with nature and our bodies)

The Moon during the day

Go outside and look for the "children's moon" during the day. Depending on the date, you may see the moon in the sky during the daylight hours.

"Once, a reader in Kansas City wrote in with the name children's moon to describe a moon visible during the day. She said this name stemmed from the idea that children can't stay up at night late enough to see the moon when it appears only in darkness.

That story prompted another reader to send in an alternate version for the origin of the name children's moon. She wrote:

I heard a daytime moon was called a 'children's moon' because their eyes were sharp enough to pick it out, where the old folks, with fading vision, could not tell it from the clouds.

Bottom line: You can see the moon during the day whenever it's fairly large in phase and fairly far from the sun on the sky's dome. So you need to know the date of full moon to know when to see a daytime moon. Learn the date of the next (or last) full moon, then start to look for the daytime moon about a week before full moon, in the afternoon sky. After full moon, look again for a week or so, this time in the morning sky. Most important criterion: look up! If you do, you'll often see the moon in the day." - <http://earthsky.org/space/when-can-you-see-a-daytime-moon>

Service (to others)

Create a Happy Ramadan card with the preschoolers to join in the cards sent by the older children.

Elementary Aged Children (1 - 5th)

Reflection

Props: dates

This month's theme is "How are we a people of Blessing?" If we were Muslim, "being a people of blessing" would mean practicing the religion of Islam. Our blessing would be the holiday of Ramadan, this year from May 15 - June 14. The Muslims consider Ramadan a blessing because it gives them an opportunity to reflect on helping others, to deepen their faith and to study the Quran, the name of their holy book. What would it be like to spend an entire month on extra study of Unitarian Universalism, to deepen your connection to this community, and to help others, every year? One of the practices of Ramadan is also to fast from sunrise to sunset for the entire month. The fast means no food or water. They have one meal before sunrise and one meal after sunset. Muslims use fasting as a blessing to help them remember those who don't have enough and to make time for good deeds.

Story

Muhammed

by Demi

https://www.amazon.com/Muhammad-Demi/dp/0689852649/ref=sr_1_5?ie=UTF8&qid=1521508098&sr=8-5&keywords=muhammad+book

"Born in Mecca in the year 570, Muhammad grew into a sensitive and thoughtful man who believed deeply in the worship of one true god.

In his fortieth year, Muhammad experienced a revelation from the angel Gabriel that he, Muhammad, was the messenger of God. Over the next twenty-three years, he received many such revelations, all of which were written down by scribes at the time of revelation to become the Koran, the sacred scripture of Islam, a religion that is practiced by nearly one-quarter of the world's population and holds as its most sacred tenet that there is no god but God.

Through a clear text and stunning illustrations based upon those of traditional Islamic expression, the award-winning artist Demi here introduces the remarkable life of the Prophet Muhammad for young readers." - Amazon

The Night of the Moon

by Hena Khan, (author) and Juli Paschkis (illustrator)

<https://www.amazon.com/Night-Moon-Muslim-Holiday-Story/dp/0811860620>

"Yasmeen, a seven-year-old Pakistani-American girl, celebrates the Muslim holidays of Ramadan, "The Night of the Moon" (Chaand Raat), and Eid. With lush illustrations that evoke Islamic art, this beautiful story offers a window into modern Muslim culture—and into the ancient roots from within its traditions have grown." - Amazon

Lailah's Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story

by Reem Faruqi (Author), Lea Lyon (Illustrator)

https://www.amazon.com/Lailahs-Lunchbox-Ramadan-Reem-Faruqi/dp/0884484319/ref=sr_1_10?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1521638675&sr=1-10&keywords=Childrens+books+on+Ramadan

Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2016, a cooperative Project of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the Children's Book Council*

Featured Book of the Month, Anti-Defamation League

American Library Association Notable Book for Children 2016

Skipping Stones Honor 2016

International Literacy Association Choices Reading List

Lailah is in a new school in a new country, thousands of miles from her old home, and missing her old friends. When Ramadan begins, she is excited that she is finally old enough to participate in the fasting but worried that her classmates won't understand why she doesn't join them in the lunchroom.

Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle

by Reza Jalali (Author), Anne Sibley O'Brien (Illustrator)

https://www.amazon.com/Moon-Watchers-Shirins-Ramadan-Miracle/dp/0884485870/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1521638675&sr=1-14&dpID=51fBkqu52iL&preST= SX218 BO1,204,203,200 QL40 &dpSrc=detail

Skipping Stones Multicultural Honor Award

Alliance Award

Maine Literary Awards, Finalist

"Looking through the tall trees in their backyard in Maine, Shirin and her dad search for a glimpse of the new moon, the sign that the month of Ramadan has begun. Ramadan is a time when Muslims around the world pray, fast, and pay special attention to doing good deeds. Shirin is nine and thinks she should be able to fast like her older brother Ali, but her parents feel she is still too young to go without food and water all day. When Shirin catches Ali sneaking food after school, she wonders: Should she tattletale or is this an opportunity for a good deed? Shirin feels left out when the others break their fasts to have their own meals after dark and in the early morning before it is light again. But then her grandmother tells a story that shows her a way she can feel more a part of Ramadan and the traditions and closeness her family enjoys during this special month of the year. Her good deeds result in a surprise for everyone!" - Amazon

Mindfulness

Eating a Raisin with Mindfulness

Ramadan is about no eating or drinking all day. Imagine what it must be like to break the fast as the sun goes down. The drink of water must taste very special. The dates and food must be extraordinary. Here is a classic mindfulness exercise which bring to mind the mindfulness of breaking the Ramadan fast.

"Place a few raisins in your hand. If you don't have raisins, any food will do. Imagine that you have just come to Earth from a distant planet without such food.

Now, with this food in hand, you can begin to explore it with all of your senses.

Focus on one of the objects as if you've never seen anything like it before. Focus on seeing this object. Scan it, exploring every part of it, as if you've never seen such a thing before. Turn it around with your fingers and notice what color it is.

Notice the folds and where the surface reflects light or becomes darker.

Next, explore the texture, feeling any softness, hardness, coarseness, or smoothness.

While you're doing this, if thoughts arise such as "Why am I doing this weird exercise?" "How will this ever help me?" or "I hate these objects," then just see if you can acknowledge these thoughts, let them be, and then bring your awareness back to the object.

Take the object beneath your nose and carefully notice the smell of it.

Bring the object to one ear, squeeze it, roll it around, and hear if there is any sound coming from it.

Begin to slowly take the object to your mouth, noticing how the arm knows exactly where to go and perhaps becoming aware of your mouth watering consistency as you chew.

When you feel ready to swallow, consciously notice the intention to swallow, then see if you can notice the sensations of swallowing the raisin, sensing it moving down to your throat and into your esophagus on its way to your stomach.

Take a moment to congratulate yourself for taking this time to experience mindful eating."
From <http://www.mbsrtraining.com/mindfully-eating-a-raisin-exercise/>

Graces and Blessings Among UU Families

From Tapestry of Faith, Creating Home, Session 11:

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/home/session11/58755.shtml>

Muslims pray 5x a day. What prayers do UU families use? Here are some suggestions to use, while building a bridge to Islam.

Videos

Ramadan Moon

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=6&v=GMdsa4z2nkY

Phases of the Moon Rap - Mr. Lee

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=14&v=79M2ISVZiY4

Bismillah (play while offering crafts)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kdt-miOhGwI>

Activities for Ramadan

Henna Hands, Fasting Chain, Bookmark

<https://goodtreemontessori.wordpress.com/2008/08/22/30-childrens-activities-for-ramadan/>

Halal Shaped Rice Krispie treats - stars and moon

<http://littlelifeofmine.com/halal-shaped-rice-crispy-treats/>

The Moon Phases Poem (free download)

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Moon-Phases-Poem-FREE-Easy-to-Read-Font-925434>

Oreo Moon Phases

<http://analyzer.depaul.edu/paperplate/Oreo%20Moon%20Phases.htm>

Watermelon Milkshake

When Ramadan falls in the hotter months, Muslims do not eat or drink during the day. So a thirst quenching recipe is served for the pre-dawn and post-sunset meals. Bring your blender and make this milkshake! <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/215579/watermelon-milkshake/>

Arts and Crafts

Moroccan Hanging Lantern

<https://www.education.com/activity/article/moroccan-hanging-lanterns/>

Foldable Phases of the Moon

<http://amyalvis.blogspot.com/2013/07/foldable-friday-phases-of-moon.html>

Movement, Sunshine and Meditation

Sufi Whirling Dervishes

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2013/12/13/february-1-2013-sufi-whirling-dervishes/14517/>

Show the video first, then invite the children to try whirling as a mediation. Because of the room needed for the whirling, you may wish to go outside.

Service

Send a Happy Ramadan Card to a local mosque

<https://www.dosomething.org/us/campaigns/sincerely-us/community>

While it's not sure that this campaign will run again for 2018, why not make your own cards for a local mosque for Ramadan, May 14 - June 14, 2018.

Appropriate Ramadan wishes:

“May this Ramadan be as bright as ever.

Wishing you all the blessings of the holy month.

May the Spirit of Ramadan stay in your heart and illuminate your soul from within. Happy Ramadan!

Ramadan Mubarak!

Happy Ramadan!”

From <http://www.latintimes.com/ramadan-kareem-30-wishes-greetings-and-messages-celebrate-muslim-holy-month-323436>

Set up a table. Offer markers. Invite congregants after the service to add to the cards.

Session 3

Blessing and Juneteenth, June 19

Young Children (P - K)

Wonder Box

Place inside: a small rainbow. I wonder what is in the box... (pull out the rainbow) Here is a rainbow! What colors are in the rainbow. Red Orange Yellow Green Blue Indigo and Violet (ROY G BIV). There are many different colors and they are all beautiful. Here is a rainbow of skin colors. There are many different colors of skin and they are all beautiful!

Show “A Color Wheel of Humanity” pg. 13 in the April, 2018 issue of National Geographic “Black and White” Special Issue. In addition, there is another color spectrum of skin tones in Africa, pg. 30.
https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazines/l/ri-search/index.html?gclid=Cj0KCQjwnfLVBRCxARIsAPvI82FQeuL0YkvXSCfzvFFtHwyVcPmsWXI_bRygQjLOgEfilkHfp_3brwaAqW8EALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds

Or

Show the “Human Rainbow” picture at <https://imgur.com/gallery/VDrAezX> or <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/03/140307-skin-color-cancer-evolution-albinos-africa/>

(This National Geographic image was created for the article but is now a part of many memes and posters. We give you the original article to avoid copyright infringement and suggest that you print out or project the photo of the lineup for use in your room.)

We believe that the beauty of all colors of skin is a blessing. We love that there is a rainbow of skin colors! This Sunday we celebrate a holiday called Juneteenth. It is a celebration of people who are African American. At first, many African Americans were slaves. They were not free. Then, in June, they were finally given their freedom. We are happy that there is no more slavery! We are happy that we can be friends.

Stories

Characters of Color; 7 Must-Read Picture Books featuring African-American Characters

<http://www.readbrightly.com/7-must-read-picture-books-featuring-african-american-characters/>

Choose a story featuring children with different skin colors.

Mindfulness

Say something like this:

Ring the bell. We put our hands on our hearts and feel the beating. Can you feel it? We breathe in love and breathe out peace for all people everywhere.

Offer the following simple Meditation.

May I be happy. May I be peaceful. May I be free.

May you be happy. May you be peaceful. May you be free.

May we be happy. May we be peaceful. May we be free.

This is what we wish for all people.

Ring the bell to signal the end of the mindfulness.

Songs and Fingerplays

Juba!

<https://www.mamalisa.com/?t=es&p=5073>

"Juba is a sort of "dance" described as a "thigh slapping art form". It came from West Africa and was performed by African American slaves. It involves slapping various parts of the body - especially the hips, thighs, chest and arms - and also stomping. The noise of the slapping and stomping plays the role of percussion in the song, keeping the beat. This is chanted as a call-and-response song."

Also check out the video on this page of Pre-K students offering their juba percussion.

Food

Juneteenth is a BBQ

Offer small cups of BBQ sauce with crackers or vegetables to dip into it.

Arts and Crafts

Black History Month Activities

Celebrate the accomplishments of African American inventors, for Juneteenth (instead of Black History Month.) Especially notable are activities for Garrett Morgan (traffic light,) Jan Matzeliger (shoe laster,) George Washington Carver (shaving cream, band aids,) Dr. Patricia Bath (treatment for cataracts)

<https://www.preschool-plan-it.com/black-history-month-theme.html>

Movement

Blow Rainbow Blessing Bubbles

Make or buy a bubble solution and blow bubbles, look for rainbows in the bubbles. We see rainbows of color! Watch out for creating a slippery floor when too many bubbles pop on a tile floor.

Invite children to stand under the bubble blowing to receive a Rainbow Blessing.

"Sunshine" (connection with nature and our bodies)

Juneteenth is an outdoor day

Serve the snack outdoors, then play games, as many communities celebrate Juneteenth outdoors.

Service (to others)

Take photos of your activities, then send out a newsletter article or article on your congregation's social media on the African American inventors you celebrated for Juneteenth. Be sure to ask for permission to post the photos from the families. Do not identify any individual child by name.

Educate your congregation!

Elementary Aged Children (1 - 5th)

Reflection

Props: a mini Juneteenth flag (color print and cut out from https://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/us_june.html)

This month's theme is "How are we a people of Blessing?" Imagine how blessed it must have felt when enslaved Africans were told they were free. That was the feeling on June 19, 1865, when the last enslaved Africans found out that they were free. It took 2 ½ years for word against slavery to reach this last group. Today we celebrate June 19th - called Juneteenth in many states. This flag has red, white and blue representing a U.S. holiday. The white star in the center echoes the Texas star for their state flag, and for the beginning of Juneteenth in Texas. Texas was the first state to proclaim Juneteenth a state holiday in 1980. The expanding star represents the spread of Juneteenth throughout the nation and world.

Story

10 Children's Books celebrating Juneteenth

<http://coloursofus.com/10-childrens-books-celebrating-juneteenth/>

Mindfulness

Freedom

Invite the sound of the bell and for the group to find a relaxing position.

When we are relaxed, we are able to dream. Here is the dream of racial equality from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. Read these words from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's speech, 1963:

"With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day...

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that; let freedom ring from the Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

Play the video:

Free at Last

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

Videos about Juneteenth

Juneteenth PBS

<https://rmpbs.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/1cc3b3d6-6c27-442d-ba9d-c7a5fbf01ceb/juneteenth-all-about-the-holidays/#.Wp10rejwbBU>

Juneteenth; Freedom at Last

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOOguH71--E>

Juneteenth Cartoon Facts

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2HAVuld0_0

Mrs. Opal Lee - 90-Year-Old Opal Lee Continues Fight for Juneteenth Holiday

<http://www.fwtx.com/articles/fwtxmag/upclose/90-year-old-opal-lee-continues-fight-juneteenth-holiday>

There is a video embedded in this article.

Game for Juneteenth

Scatter Tag

"The Civil War had been over for two months when 1,800 U.S. troops landed in Galveston in June 1865 and placed the city under martial law. Agog at the sea of blue-clad soldiers, the defeated Confederates and their black servants gathered to hear General Gordon Granger read military orders declaring "absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves." The whites in the crowd showed little or no reaction; after all, they had known about Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation for two and a half years, since the president had issued it on January 1, 1863. But the black listeners, from whom the news had long been withheld, were jubilant: "We all walked down the road singing and shouting to beat the band," recalled one Texas freedwoman, Molly Harrell, in *The Slave Narratives of Texas*, a book based on a thirties-era federal oral-history project. Said another, Lou Smith: "I ran off and hid in the plum orchard and said over 'n' over, 'I'se free, I'se free; I ain't never going back to Miss Jo.'" Many freed slaves immediately left home, in what became known as "the scatter," to find long-lost family members or to settle in the friendlier North."

<https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/independence-day/>

Use Freeze Tag as your model and call it Scatter Tag and try out the 7 variations as you invent "Scatter Tag" for Juneteenth.

<https://www.care.com/c/stories/3824/7-fun-freeze-tag-alternatives/>

Arts and Crafts

Juneteenth Flag

http://www.ljgraf.com/flag_designs.html

"Juneteenth flag designer L.J. Graf packed lots of meaning into her design. The colors red, white, and blue echo the American flag to symbolize that the slaves and their descendants were Americans. The star in the middle pays homage to Texas, while the bursting "new star" on the "horizon" of the red and blue fields represents a new freedom and a new people." - <http://mentalfloss.com/article/501680/12-things-you-might-not-know-about-juneteenth>

Invite the children to replicate the Juneteenth Flag with red and blue construction paper, and white copy paper for the star. Use white crayon to create the expanding rays.

Sunshine

Visit a Park or enjoy some outdoors time

Houston's Emancipation Park was created for Juneteenth. Visit a local park! Reflect on the quote below, imagining what it would be like to be barred from parks and swimming pools for over 250 years.

"In 1872 a group of black community leaders in Texas, all former slaves, pooled together \$800 (a seemingly impossible feat at the time) to purchase 10 acres of open land as home for their Juneteenth celebration. In honor of their freedom, they named it Emancipation Park. It was the only Public Park and swimming pool open to African Americans in Houston until the 1950s." That's 278 years of segregation.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/juneteenth-heart-33-million-houston-park-renovation-n593921>

Service

Heat up a grill and serve some BBQ in honor of Juneteenth. Or buy a bucket of BBQ items and serve them to the congregation in honor of Juneteenth. Who might you collaborate with to host the grilling? Hang the children's Juneteenth flags.

Session 4

Blessing and the Web of Life: Celebration of the Senses Day

*Senses are blessings. There are a variety of sensory activities in this session for the five traditionally recognized senses of touching, tasting, hearing, seeing and smelling. If your group includes a child or children with sensory disabilities, add a variety of sensory activities. Offer touch **and** hearing during mindfulness, tasting **and** seeing during other activities, for example. Additional senses which might be explored include temperature, balance, and vibration.*

Young Children (P - K)

Wonder Box

Place inside: some cinnamon in an envelope, small shaker or cap.

What is in the Wonder Box today? An envelope. That's not very exciting. We can use our senses to try to find out what is inside. We look at it. It has a small bump of something. We hear it shaking. We touch it and feel something in there. We smell it.... Oh! There is something inside with a smell. Can you smell it. What does it smell like? It's cinnamon. We could also try a small taste if anyone wants to. We used our senses to figure out what was inside. Our senses are a blessing. We use our senses to find out about the world around us. Today we are going to celebrate the blessings of our senses.

What are our senses. There are five. Smell, taste, touch, hear, see.

When do we use our sense of smell? We smelled the cinnamon.

When do we use our sense of taste? To try new foods? To lick something we really like? What do you like to taste? What don't you like to taste?

When do we use our sense of touch? To pet a kitty and feel the soft fur.

When do we use our sense of hearing? To listen to the bell.

When do we use our sense of seeing? To see our friends! Hello!

Sometimes our senses don't work. Then we learn other ways to know about the world. For instance, we use sign language if we can't hear. (Read the book, the Handmade Alphabet).

Stories

My Five Senses

by Margaret Miller (Author)

<https://www.amazon.com/Five-Senses-Aladdin-Picture-Books/dp/0689820097>

Multi-ethnic children explore their senses.

The Handmade Alphabet

by Laura Rankin (Author)

https://www.amazon.com/Handmade-Alphabet-Picture-Puffins/dp/0140558764?ie=UTF8&tag=blessinoverfl-20&link_code=bil&camp=213689&creative=392969

Gorgeous pencil illustrations of diverse human hands—male and female, young and old—signing the letters of the alphabet make this alphabet book an incredible learning resource. The entries are further supplemented with objects that begin with the same letter. Author Laura Rankin was inspired to create this book by her deaf stepson.

My Five Senses (Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science 1)

by Alike (Author, Illustrator)

https://www.amazon.com/Five-Senses-Lets-Read-Find-Out-Science/dp/006238192X/ref=pd_bxgy_14_img_2?encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=006238192X&pd_rd_r=6K7KSDWSXXBT7Q7K90W7&pd_rd_w=IPHp5&pd_rd_wg=0GFpH&psc=1&refRID=6K7KSDWSXXBT7Q7K90W7&dplD=51Rlg7MIXcL&preST= SX258 BO1,204,203,200 QL70 &dpSrc=detail

The Listening Walk

by Paul Showers (Author), Alike (Illustrator)

https://www.amazon.com/Listening-Walk-Paul-Showers/dp/0064433226/ref=pd_bxgy_14_img_3?encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=0064433226&pd_rd_r=8QRK9QRYJXZ0FCX5EPKQ&pd_rd_w=q4I9Y&pd_rd_wg=VVwv3&psc=1&refRID=8QRK9QRYJXZ0FCX5EPKQ&dplD=51sxr9nlzxl&preST= SX218 BO1,204,203,200 QL40 &dpSrc=detail

“Put on your socks and shoes -- and don't forget your ears! We're going on a listening walk. Shhhhh. Do not talk. Do not hurry. Get ready to fill your ears with a world of wonderful and surprising sounds.” - Amazon. Add in a touching or smelling walk, too!

Mindfulness

Invite the children to sit and listen to the sound of a bell, a gong, or singing bowl until it disappears. Say something like this:

Hear the sounds around you. (Feel the vibrations around you.) Pretend that ... that every sound (vibration) is new to you... What do you hear (feel)? For example, children laughing, the din of traffic, the sound of balls being kicked, babies crying, an ambulance siren, birds singing, and so on. (A truck rumbling by, a person walking down the hall) Are these familiar sounds? Can your child hear anything he has not heard before? Encourage him to listen (feel) very carefully...

Can the children listen (feel) for their own heartbeat?

Put your hand over your heart and try to listen (feel).

After a few seconds, say:. We breathe in and breathe out peace. We feel peaceful. We breathe out and feel love. Breathe in, feel peace. Breathe out, love.” Sit with me for a few more breaths. Now return to us there in this room.

Ring the bell to signal an end to the mindfulness.

FingerPlays

“1. The Blessings of our Senses

I have eyes so I can see (curl fingers of both hands around eyes like binoculars)
The smallest leaf (point fingers close together)
On the tallest tree. (hands go high overhead)
My ears can hear the cars go by. (cup hands behind ears)
My lips can taste some apple pie. (lick your lips)
My nose can smell a rose so sweet, (touch your nose)
And tell me when it's time to eat. (rub your tummy)
My hands can pet a kitten's fur, (make stroking motion)
And touch its chest to feel it purr.
My five senses help me very well,
To see, hear, taste, touch and smell. (touch related body part with each word)

2. Now ask the children answer each of the following questions by pointing to a body part (or parts) and naming the sense.

How can you tell...

There's a cake in the oven? (nose/smell)

The radio is on? (ears/hearing)

The lemonade is too sour? (mouth/taste)

Your friend is wearing a red shirt? (eye/sight)

An ice cube is cold? (fingers/touch)

It's dark outside? (eyes/sight)

The telephone is ringing? (ears/hearing)

The candy is sweet? (mouth/taste)

A bunny's tail is soft? (fingers/touch)...

<https://www.gryphonhouse.com/activities/five-senses-fingerplay>

Games

The blessing of our nose!

“Experience the sweet smell of discovery! Collect items with distinct odors, such as a flower, a banana, cut grass, or a lemon. Place the items in separate bags and invite your child to play a "smelly" guessing game. Hand her one of the bags and ask her to smell (but not look at) its contents. After she's guessed, show the contents of the bag. When all the items have been identified, ask her how she guessed each one. Talk together about foods and their distinctive smells. When describing a scent, encourage your child to go beyond "good" or "bad." Help expand her vocabulary by modeling more descriptive words such as sweet, spicy, flowery, and sour. Then enjoy a snack by cutting the foods into small pieces for tasting.” - <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/science-nature-activities/celebrate-summer-learning-senses>

Arts and Crafts

Make Telescopes

Invite the children to decorate paper towel tubes and toilet tissue tubes to take outside later. Glue on tissue paper.

Scented Markers

Provide a variety of scented markers and invite the children to notice the smells while they draw.

Food

Make popcorn if your group is old enough. Popcorn making provides a riot of sensory experience!

Or

Cut up a variety of fruit, with a variety of colors, textures and tastes.

Movement

A Listening or Touching Blessing Walk

Take a listening or touching blessing walk around the room or into the hall. What do they hear or feel?

Invite them to continue the walk outside.

Sunshine (connection to Nature and our Bodies)

Listening Tubes - we are blessed with a sense of hearing

Experiment with listening. Collect different hollow items (cardboard tubes, juice cans, seashells) to listen through. What do they hear through the objects? How do the sounds change through each item? What can they see through the tubes?

Play hide-and-seek with a whistle

In this version of the classic game, the hider toots a whistle to signal to the seekers where she might be. Your child's ears will be tuned to the whistle as he attempts to follow the sound and win the game.

Games above from <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/science-nature-activities/celebrate-summer-learning-senses>

For children with sensory disabilities, add we are blessed with a sense of touching, balance, seeing, and tasting with activities from <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/science-nature-activities/celebrate-summer-learning-senses>

Service

Collecting the Assistance Equipment

Arrange for the children to help the sound system tech collect and sort the Assistance Equipment used to help people hear the service if their sense of hearing doesn't work well.

Or

Provide cinnamon or nutmeg in a shaker for the coffee hour. Make sure to add a little sign about who it is from and why it is there: "The Preschool Group celebrated the blessing of our senses today. Enjoy this cinnamon and nutmeg for your drink provided by them."

Elementary Aged Children (1 - 5th)

Reflections

Props: *A Mystery Box (see prep notes below)*

Today is Celebrate of the Senses Day. What are the five common senses? Taste, sight, hearing, touch and smell. We use our senses to let us know about the world. Did you know that there are a few other senses, too? We sense vibration, balance and temperature. All of these senses are blessings of our bodies.

When we don't have all of our senses, we learn other ways to explore our world. For instance, if you can't hear someone speaking you can learn sign language and see them speaking. If you can't see words on a page, you can learn Braille and feel words as raised dots on a page.

Pause and invite comments about Braille and Sign Language from the children, as you may encounter children who are learning one of these.

Our senses help us understand the world. And we can use our senses to help us understand mysteries.

Hold up one of the mystery boxes. Prepare mystery boxes from empty boxes, [such as used to box mugs](#), which are taped securely shut. Place an object inside each box such as a bolt, a small comb, or a large paper clip. Include a few with smells, such as a cotton ball soaked in vinegar. Make enough boxes for every 2-3 children to share one. Vary the items inside the boxes, although some can contain similar items.

This is a mystery box. Today, I'm going to give boxes to each group of 2-3 children. Your job is to use your senses to figure out what is in the box. But before we do this, let's listen to a story about the blessings of our senses.

Story

Trout are made of Trees

From Tapestry of Faith, Circle of Trees

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/trees/workshop3/288667.shtml>

Read the story dramatically and have fun with the sound effects!

Trout are made of trees.

In fall, trees let go of leaves, which swirl and twirl and slip into streams.

They ride in a rush above rocks and over rapids.

They snag and settle soggily down.

Bacteria feed on the leaves.

Algae grow, softening surfaces.

Next the shredders move in:

Crane flies, caddisflies,

Shrimp, and stoneflies shred leaves.

Rip and snip!

They eat the algae-covered leaves,

which become part of them.

Meanwhile predators are swimming and stalking . . .

Crunch—there go the caddisflies!
Munch—there go the stoneflies!
Now the leaves have become part of the predators.
Trout join in. Swim and snap!
Fins flick. Rush. Zap!
They eat dragonflies, caddisflies, stoneflies, and minnows.
The leaves have now become part of the trout.
Tree shade keeps the stream cool for spawning. Female trout gather over gravel and lay eggs.
The males fertilize the eggs.
Here come the hatchlings!
They grow up in a stream
—Crack! Kersplash! —
shaped by fallen branches.
Trout are made of trees.
So are the bears
and the people
who catch the trout and eat them.

My First Book of Sign Language

by Joan Holub (Illustrator)

<https://www.amazon.com/My-First-Book-Sign-Language/dp/0439635829>

Watersong

by Tim McCanna (Author), Richard Smythe (Illustrator)

https://www.amazon.com/Watersong-Tim-McCanna/dp/1481468812/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1522344461&sr=1-3&dpID=51IZJmFx9UL&preST=_SX258_BO1,204,203,200_QL70_&dpSrc=detail

A New York Public Library Best Book for Kids; An NCTE Notable Poetry Book

“McCanna’s carefully chosen words are nearly all onomatopoeia, a cacophony of water sounds that resonates on tongue and ear, demanding to be read aloud...Beautiful.” —Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

Mystery Box Activity

Our senses are often taken for granted. We live our lives without taking a moment to understand what a blessing it is to use our senses. Our senses tell us a lot about what is around us.

Hand out the mystery boxes. Invite each group to use their senses to try to figure out what is inside the mystery box. After a few minutes, say the following:

The mystery box shows us the scientific method. We use our deductive reasoning through our senses to try to test what is inside. Can you figure out what is inside?

Give the groups a few minutes to explore their mystery box.

What have you done so far? (usually they shake it or weigh it in their hands). Have you tried smelling it? (You may wish to make a box or two with something smelly in it, such as a cotton ball with vinegar).

Have you tried hearing what is inside? Does it sound like anything around here?

What do you think is inside?

Write down their hypotheses.

These are your hypotheses. How else can you test your hypothesis?

What have you learned from listening to others? (there may be different things in each box).

Once you are ready to announce your hypothesis, share it, and then invite another group to swap with you. Do they come up with the same hypothesis?

Note: I have done this with 2nd graders and graduate students. The Second graders were the best at trying out a variety of things. It helps to have some tools available in case a group wants to try something. Tools might be a magnet to see if the object is metal, a ruler, an empty box of the same size as the mystery box so kids can place things in it to try to replicate the sound or weight. It helps to have some easily identifiable objects such as a bolt or a cotton ball soaked in vinegar, in some boxes. Invite the group to come to consensus about what might be in these boxes, if they can. Otherwise, let it remain a mystery.

Now for the kicker: DO NOT OPEN THE BOXES. EVER. This will drive the kids crazy. Point out that many things in science remain unseen and never proved, such as what happened at the Big Bang. No one was there, but we can use our reasoning to create hypotheses that become more and more proven. Hypotheses then become a theory. But we will never know the actual facts since no one was there to use their senses.

About being UU: One way to ease the frustration of not knowing what is in the boxes for sure is to suggest that as Unitarian Universalists we learn to love the questions. We may never know the answers to some questions. Like, what happens after we die? But we find comfort in loving the question and using our senses to understand what we can. That is one of the blessings of being Unitarian Universalist.

Mindfulness

Invite the children to sit and listen to the sound of a bell, a gong, or singing bowl until it disappears. Say something like this:

We let go of our busy things. We sit so still. We invite the sound of the bell.

We listen until the sound is gone. We celebrate the blessing of our senses. We listen to the sound around us with our hearing... We imagine the tastes of our favorite food on our tongues... We smell the coffee brewing in the coffee hour,... we touch our hands to each other and feel our skin,... and finally, we try to see the insides of our eyelids as we rest in mindfulness.

We breathe in and breathe out peace. We feel peaceful. We breathe out and feel love. Breathe in, feel peace. Breathe out, love." Sit with me for a few more breaths. Now return to us there in this room. Ring the bell to signal an end to the mindfulness.

Videos and Songs

Celebrate all the ways to use our senses, a diversity of techniques.

ASL Animals Song Lesson for Kids - Learn how to sign Animals with Fireese

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

ASL ABC Lesson and Song - Learn Sign Language Alphabet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYhAAMDQI-Q>

GRATEFUL: A Love Song to the World | Empty Hands Music | nimo feat. daniel nahmod

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO2o98Zpzg8>

Arts and Crafts

Pink Peppermint Playdough

<https://www.makeandtakes.com/pink-peppermint-play-dough>

Exploring Our Sense of Smell

<https://www.makeandtakes.com/exploring-5-senses-smell>

Movement

It's a Miracle Game

From Tapestry of Faith, Miracles, Session 1:

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/miracles/session-1/leader-resource-1>

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

Outdoor Blessings Scavenger Hunt

Can the children find objects and places for each sense?

Smell - a smelly sewer, a flower?

Taste - beware of berries unless you can identify them! What about providing a taste of lemonade?

Sight - clouds, tree limbs, birds

Hearing - sounds all around

Touch - textures, rough from pavement, smooth like glass.

Vibration - from a big truck driving by shaking the ground

Balance - on a rock or curb

Temperature - warm from the sun or cool in the shade

Service

Make Popcorn for the Congregation - a burst of blessings

Popcorn is a riot for the senses. Invite the group to make popcorn, salt and butter it, then place in plastic baggies to make individual servings for coffee hour. If you want to add another layer of service, have the children charge for a bag and donate the money to a cause which serves people who need help with a sense - such as

National Association of the Deaf <https://www.charities.org/charities/national-association-deaf-nad>

Or

American Foundation for the Blind <https://www.afb.org/default.aspx>

Chapel

Here's a format for a Children's Chapel or Circle Time. Mix and match the components to fit your program. We recommend some type of ritual that is the same most every Sunday, to create comfort and memories even with discontinuous attendance. Post the 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.

Welcome Centerpiece

Choose a color for a cloth, a chalice, an offering box, a way of sharing Joys and Sorrows (candles or rocks in water). A white cloth or sarong might evoke a white Christening robe, a wedding dress, or the scarf used by Buddhists called a [Khata](#).

Entering

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."

Song

Bless the World

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/music/bless-world>

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

Move into a comfortable position and close your eyes if you are comfortable.

Relax your toes, your calves, your knees, your hips, your torso, your shoulders. Feel the tension in your fingers and hands be released. Feel your elbows and biceps relax. Take a deep breath and feel your lungs move deeply and slowly. Move your tongue from the top of your mouth, relax your jaw, and ears, and eyebrows.

Share this quote:

Learn to get in touch with the silence within yourself and know that everything in life has purpose. There are no mistakes, no coincidences, all events are blessings given to us to learn from. - Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Remain in silence for 10 more breaths.

Ring the bell.

Return slowly to this room, to your body, open your eyes when you are ready. Feel the Blessings with you this month!

Story, optional

Use one of the recommended stories/songs For All Ages, or a book from the book recommendations.

Songs, redux

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

Youth and Young Adult

Here are a variety of components for use in your Middle School/Sr High/Young Adult Groups. In addition, check out:

- *The Stories for All Ages section*
- *This month's Soul Matters Small Group Packet (after all, isn't Youth Group a Small Group Ministry?!)*
- *An adult worship service on "Being A People of Blessing"*

Reflections

Who Should be Your Patron Saint?

Buzzfeed - *Who is your UU Patron Saint*

https://www.buzzfeed.com/katiecovey/who-is-your-uu-patron-saint-3cuz6?utm_term=.dhdgl2Gr3#.mjK7vPiDR

Reflect on who might be your Patron Saint, and what the purpose is. A patron saint is someone to ask for blessings from outside when things get tough. Katie Covey created this Quiz.

Blessing for New Drivers by Rev. Gary Kowalski

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/blessing/new-drivers>

Invite new and prospective drivers to join in this blessing in the parking lot next to someone's car.

Incarnational Beatitudes by Rev. Nicole Anderson

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/blessing/incarnational-beatitudes>

Create artwork or a collage from magazines as you reflect upon those who are marginalized in our society. Invite comparison to the original Beatitudes of Jesus.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/beatitudes.html>

Celebration of the Senses Day, June 24

Go outside and close your eyes; listen to the sounds, feel the breezes and try to pick up on outdoor scents:

In your home (away from stairs) close your eyes and try to navigate to different rooms;

Close your eyes and have someone take objects from the refrigerator and see if you can guess the items by their smell;

Turn on music that you normally don't listen to and sit down with nothing else to distract you (no games or reading material) fully take in the music. Try to pick out the different instruments used;

Take a normal, everyday object that you've seen a thousand times, and take a really close look at it. Use a magnifying glass to look closely. Close your eyes and feel its texture; and

Have a type of food you've never had before. Close your eyes as you eat it." -

<http://kisbyto.blogspot.com/2012/06/celebration-of-senses-day.html>

Story

WHG Carter and a Step Towards Reconciliation

From Tapestry of Faith, Toolbox of Faith, Atonement

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/toolbox/session15/reconciliation>

The blessing of awareness.

“...Reverend W.H.G. Carter was a minister who founded a Unitarian Church in Cincinnati in 1918. It was probably the only Unitarian church in America at the time that was an African American Unitarian church. It was called the Church of the Unitarian Brotherhood. At the time, other Unitarians knew about the church and its founder, but turned their backs because the church was African American and poor..”

Songs

Bless the World

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/music/bless-world>

Blessed - Daniel Caesar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKmn7JPFra8>

Nas and Damian Marley - Count My Blessings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ba3LtBmBuho>

"Freedom" - Musical Performance from black-ish Season 4 Premiere for Juneteenth

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t06_9KI5hIE

Phases of the Moon - Mr. Lee Rap

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=14&v=79M2ISVZiY4

Ramadan, May 15 - June 14, follows the lunar calendar.

Bismillah

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kdt-miOhGwI>

GRATEFUL: A Love Song to the World | Empty Hands Music | nimo feat. daniel nahmod

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO2o98Zpzg8>

Arts and Crafts

Posters of African Americans - Juneteenth

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/african-american-quotation-posters/>

“This collection of original posters created for The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross PBS series features quotations by famous African Americans, including leaders, intellectuals and cultural figures such as Harriet Tubman, W.E.B. DuBois, Zora Neale Hurston, Jackie Robinson, Malcolm X, President Barack Obama, and more. All the posters can be downloaded, printed and shared.” - PBS

Rainbow of Skin Colors for Juneteenth

Time for a throwback to Markers! Provide [Skin tone markers](#) and paper to create their own Color Wheel of Humanity. Make a rainbow.

Show “A Color Wheel of Humanity” pg. 13 in the April, 2018 issue of National Geographic “Black and White” Special Issue. In addition, there is another color spectrum of skin tones in Africa, pg. 30.

https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazines/l/ri-search/index.html?gclid=Cj0KCQjwnfLVBRCxARIsAPvI82FQeuL0YkvXSCfzvFFtHwyVcPmsWXI_bRygQjjLOgEfIlkHfp_3brwaAqW8EALw_wcB&gclidsrc=aw.ds

Or

Show the “Human Rainbow” picture at <https://imgur.com/gallery/VDrAezX> or <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/03/140307-skin-color-cancer-evolution-albinos-africa/>

(This National Geographic image was created for the article but is now a part of many memes and posters. We give you the original article to avoid copyright infringement and suggest that you print out or project the photo of the lineup for use in your room.)

We believe that the beauty of all colors of skin is a blessing. We love that there is a rainbow of skin colors!

Role Play

Blessing

Watch the video “The Gentle Art of Blessing”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=WegAgepCYfo

Read the following poem about creating blessings:

The Summer Day by Mary Oliver

<https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/133.html>

“I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.”

Then create and act out a blessing for someone or something which came to mind when you were watching the video, that you know needs a blessing. You may invite another person to help you with creating and acting it out.

Mindfulness

Sensory Reflection

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/sensory-reflection>

By Claudene (Deane) Oliva

We invite each of you to take a deep breath into the present moment, and, realizing that not everyone will have the functions to enter into all of these movements, but grateful for the skills that we do have, we invite you, as you are willing and able, to participate in this interactive meditation.

Spirit of love, God of many names, we enter into this time of centering and sensory reflection. Let us shake out our arms and hands and rest them by our sides. Let us shake out our legs and feet and plant them on the floor. Let us stretch our heads high. Let us take a deep breath of thankfulness.

Let us touch our eyes, happy to have the beauty of colors, line and shapes. Let us imagine the beauty of the world, the flowers, the trees, the babies, the puppies, all of the things in which we delight.

Let us touch our ears. Through them we hear glorious sounds, happy ones and sad ones, beautiful songs and lonely cries. Let us listen well so that we may live fully.

Let us touch our lips, for through these lips we receive the food and drink that nourishes us and helps us grow and we speak the words that express our thoughts and feelings.

Let us touch our hearts for it is our hearts that we know and share love.

Let us feel the world around us; In our imagination, let us experience the wind that cools us, the sun that warms us, and the rain that nourishes the earth and cleanses us all.

The beauty of life is all around us. Let us softly say, each in our own way, thank you. Thank you god, thank you nature, thank you world—and may we smile in delight.

A Tree is a Blessing, guided imagery

From Tapestry of Faith, Circle of Trees, Workshop 1.

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/life/workshop2/159132.shtml>

Moving as quietly as you can, sit or lie down in a comfortable position and close your eyes. (pause) Take a deep breath. (pause) Notice how your body feels. Notice how your mind feels. Take a couple of long, slow breaths, in and out, in and out, and begin to let go and relax your body and mind. (pause) Take another full breath, and as you breathe out, relax your legs and your arms. Breathe in, and as you breathe out, relax your abdomen and your chest. Breathe in again, and as you breathe out, relax your face and your head.

Now take a moment to imagine a sunny meadow. It is summertime, and the meadow is carpeted with grasses and wildflowers. In the middle of the meadow, you see a large, beautiful old tree. It can be any type of tree that you want. Take a good look at the tree. This tree is your special tree, and you can imagine it any way you want. Notice its overall shape and color. Notice its leaves and branches. Notice any flowers or berries it may have. Notice any nuts or pods just beginning to form.

Gaze at your tree with its many branches and begin to walk toward it. Feel the sun shining its gentle warmth on you as you walk toward the tree. Breathe in the fresh, clean air around you. As you get closer, notice that the air is even fresher and purer.

When you reach the tree, walk slowly around it. Look up into its brown branches and notice all the green leaves waving in a gentle breeze. Put your hand out and feel the texture of the bark around the large, old trunk. When you have walked almost all the way around the tree, imagine a rope and slat ladder hanging from one of the lower branches of your tree. (pause)

Climb up the ladder and into the tree. Imagine that today, climbing into your tree is as easy as lowering yourself into a comfy chair. You have all the strength and agility you need to fully explore your tree. Wherever you want to go in your tree, a ladder appears so that you can easily explore that part of your tree.

As you climb, you may encounter creatures that live in or visit the tree. If you see a bird, a spider, or another creature, greet it with a nod and thank it for sharing its tree with you.

If you wish, climb to the very top of the tree. Take half a minute to continue to explore your tree. This is all the time you need.

(After 30 seconds) Now that you have explored your tree, find a comfortable place to rest. Maybe there is a spot near the main trunk where a branch comes out at the perfect angle to form a seat. Sit down here or any other comfy spot. Relax . . . and think about the wonderful time you have had exploring your tree. In a moment I will ask you to slowly sit up and open your eyes.

(Pause for about 10 seconds) Now, slowly sit up and gently open your eyes.

Games

Deep Fun games for the theme of “Blessing”

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

Be A Blessing to the World - Tell All

Parameters: 5 to 15 people

Materials: A bag of treats

Pass around the bag saying, “Take only a few, and don’t eat them yet” Once everyone has their treats, announce that they have to tell one thing about themselves for every treat they took. At least one of the things needs to be how they are a blessing to the world.

The Interconnected Web of Blessing

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 bless or affirm. They say something they love 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 blessing or find a place to hang up the web.

Angel Blessing

(Remember anyone can opt out if they don't feel comfortable.)

Form two lines facing each other. Have one person from the end of the line (or two people holding hands) close their eyes and place their arms crossed on their chest. Direct them to proceed down the aisle of the double line with their eyes closed. As they pass, each person washes their aura with their hands, passing their fingers and hands lightly over their body, from the crown of their head to the ground, without actually touching them. If the person should stray, the people in the lines can gently direct them back on course. When they reach the end, their friends can communicate to them, with touch, that it's time to open their eyes. Continue until everyone has had a chance.

Movies with a theme of Blessing

Isle of Dogs

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/movie-reviews/isle-of-dogs>

The blessing of friends and teamwork in this Wes Anderson stop motion animated film.

Miss Kiet's Children

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/movie-reviews/miss-kiets-children>

The blessing of diversity.

"... Miss Kiet's Children is a subtitled European documentary about a Dutch grammar school teacher whose class is made up of young refugees to the Netherlands. The entire documentary takes place in Kiet's classroom or the surrounding school and follows the 6- to 10-year-old kids of various ethnicities (but mostly Syrian) who are navigating a new country, language, expectations, and friendships." - Common Sense Media

Ladies First (G) 39 minutes

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/movie-reviews/ladies-first>

Available on Google Play. Blessing of determination.

"This short-form documentary about India's best hope for Olympic gold at the Rio games is as inspiring as it is sobering. Ladies First isn't a feel-good story of triumph in the face of overwhelming odds. It doesn't shy away from the harsh realities of Deepika Kumari's background, or from taking India's leadership to task for the way in which aspiring female athletes are given short shrift. Western viewers may be surprised by the pervasive sexist attitudes that remain in parts of a country that beat the U.S. to a woman prime minister by over 50 years and counting.

Deepika herself is engaging, relatable, and easy to root for; a genuine role model for anyone with aspirations in the face of tough odds. Her accomplishments are truly remarkable, and her story is far from over. Families will find a lot to admire about a young woman who shows what it takes to excel, to keep going after disappointments and setbacks, and who's willing to give it everything she's got." - Common Sense Media

“Sunshine”

Take a Blessed Bike Ride

Blessing of the Bikes

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/blessing/blessing-bikes>

Request a blessing from your worship leader or other leader or use the version above. Invite the group to take a bike ride together. Make it short and sweet, riding to ice cream, or pizza or a coffee shop.

Service

Offer a blessing circle after the service, for anyone who has been bullied, seen bullying, or partaken in bullying.

“A blessing for victims of bullying

Bullying is an extremely common form of violence. It starts at a very young age and it occurs in daycare centers, on and off school grounds and college campuses, at social and sporting events. This is a worldwide problem, but in the US alone, 2.1 million school children in grades K-12 are bullies, and 2.7 million are victims of bullying. Bullying is linked to 75% of all school shooting incidents and young people suffering from bullying are up to 9 times more likely to contemplate or commit suicide.

We bless the children and teens who are being bullied by their peers, in their peace, their serenity, their strength, and their courage.

We bless them in their understanding of their divine nature as children of the universe entitled to love and respect. We bless them in their recognition that whatever insults and injuries are hurled at them, they are always surrounded by a loving Presence that will guide and protect them and never abandon them.

We bless them in their wisdom to seek help when facing hatred and intolerance from their peers. We bless them in their refusal to accept labels that would demean and humiliate them. We bless them in their courage to resist the temptation to retaliate, feel victimized, or even consider taking their own lives when pressures get too hard.

We bless the witnesses of bullying, no matter what their ages, in their refusal to condone, participate in, or encourage any bullying. We bless them in their ability to take intelligent steps to stop any abusive conduct, and above all we bless them in their capacity to see the goodness in themselves, the victims, and the perpetrators.

And finally we bless also the ones who bully that their innate goodness as children of God, hidden behind a mask of fear or aggression, will guide their thoughts and actions.” - from The Gentle Art of Blessing by Pierre Pradervand

<https://gentleartofblessing.org/a-blessing-for-victims-of-bullying/>

Family and Parent Resources

These resources support parents as they try to live out and engage our themes with their children. We can ask “What does it mean to be a parent of Blessing” or “What does it mean to be a family of Blessing?” As you use these resources to engage these questions, keep in mind some additional ways to use them with other parents or your church community:

- *Reflect with those in your family.*
- *Share and discuss them with other parents or another family.*
- *Use them in a Parent Circle that meets on Sunday afternoon or mid-week.*

Apps

Who Am I? Race Awareness Game (The Blessing of Diversity)

<https://www.common sensemedia.org/app-reviews/who-am-i-race-awareness-game>

“Developed by a Harvard professor and an award-winning producer of interactive entertainment for children, Who Am I? engages adults and children in frank discussions about sensitive subjects concerning race, ethnicity, and culture. Similar to playing the game Guess Who?, parents choose a picture from a large group of racially diverse portraits, then hand the device to their children. Kids ask a series of questions regarding physical attributes, and eventually discover the right one by process of elimination. Each portrait comes with quotes from the person explaining how he/she identifies him/herself. The quotes make ideas about race feel more personal, although some of the quotes could reinforce assumptions without parental guidance to offer context.

Some parents may think it unwise to broach the subject of race with younger children, but the game’s introductory text makes a compelling argument that children are already thinking about differences in the way people look and regard themselves and others at a young age, and that it’s best to help guide them on this cognitive process. Still, it’s a parenting decision that moms and dads will need to make for themselves..” - Common Sense Media review

Videos

Stacey Kramer- The Best Gift I Ever Survived TED talk

https://www.ted.com/talks/stacey_kramer_the_best_gift_i_ever_survived

GRATEFUL: A Love Song to the World | Empty Hands Music | nimo feat. daniel nahmod

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO2o98Zpzg8>

Books

A Child's Book of Blessings and Prayers

By: Eliza Blanchard Illustrated By: Rocco Baviera

<https://www.uuabookstore.org/A-Childs-Book-of-Blessings-and-Prayers-P16995.aspx>

“Rich treasury of graces, poems, prayers and blessings drawn from around the world. Selections have been specially chosen to address the spiritual needs of children and to encourage giving, service and gratitude. Includes words to bless the morning, share at bedtime, honor a birthday, even give thanks for a friend next-door. Each selection is surrounded by engaging and child-friendly, full-color illustrations. This diverse collection, with prayers from Hindu, Sioux, Islamic, Jewish, Christian and Unitarian

Universalist traditions, to name only a few, highlights the common threads that can unite people of all faiths. Beautifully illustrated in full color. Ages 4 and up. - InSpirit UUA Bookstore

The Gentle Art of Blessing: A Simple Practice That Will Transform You and Your World

by Pierre Pradervand (Author)

https://www.amazon.com/Gentle-Art-Blessing-Practice-Transform-ebook/dp/B002TNGBJU/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1521469988&sr=1-1&keywords=9781439153635

“Pradervand describes blessing as genuinely wishing the best for another person through seeing their individual worth and honoring them for it. By looking at several different perspectives -- providing spiritual inspiration from Hinduism, Taoism, the Koran, the Bible, and other important spiritual sources - The Gentle Art of Blessing explores...this powerfully simple way of perceiving and shaping our surroundings, showing how blessings can reflect the unconditional love and acceptance that is necessary for world -- and inner -- peace.” - Amazon

Books to Help Kids Understand the Fight for Racial Equality - for Juneteenth

<http://www.readbrightly.com/books-to-help-kids-understand-the-fight-for-racial-equality/>

Articles

Blessing for New Drivers by Rev. Gary Kowalski

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/blessing/new-drivers>

The Blessings of Atheism

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/06/opinion/sunday/the-blessings-of-atheism.html>

CSA as Spiritual Discipline

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/csa-spiritual-discipline>

“...While the word discipline may want to make us run and hide, a spiritual practice or discipline is meant to help us find our center.”

The God Bless You Revolution; For Atheists and Agnostics

<http://www.myincrediblewebsite.com/the-god-bless-you-revolution-for-atheists-and-agnostics/>

Grace for Atheists (Meal Blessing)

<https://ask.metafilter.com/23036/Grace-for-atheists>

Interfaith Daily Prayers

http://www.spiralgoddess.com/InterFaith_Daily_Prayers.html

A Thanksgiving Prayer for the Agnostic

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-smalley/a-thanksgiving-prayer-for_b_146730.html

Let our hearts be filled with kindness,

Our minds be calm and light

May thanks arise within us

For all we share tonight.

A 4-year-old furnishes mother with keys to healing

<https://gentleartofblessing.org/a-four-year-old-furnishes-mother-with-keys-to-healing/>

Movies for families about Blessing/Gratitude

There are movies about blessings which are evangelical Christian and not appropriate for UU families. However, there are movies which include Gratitude as a theme, and which can be translated into Being a People of Blessing.

Ten Movies that Teach Gratitude

<http://leannesowul.com/gratitude-2/ten-movies-teach-gratitude/>

Up

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/movie-reviews/up>

The blessing of a rich life, lived well.

Coco (PG, 7+)

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/movie-reviews/coco>

The blessing of family, through the story of a Latino boy.

A Wrinkle in Time (PG, 10+)

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/movie-reviews/a-wrinkle-in-time>

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/5-conversations-to-have-with-your-kids-after-a-wrinkle-in-time>

The blessing of hope and love defeat the darkness.

Program Add Ons

Resources to expand or deepen your programming.

Calendar Add Ons

Interfaith

- Ramadan
 - <https://www.education.com/activity/ramadan/>
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_fc3fhZ15o
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ccfYGF4glg>

Unitarian Universalist

- Flower Communion
 - <https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/zottolireginald/flowercommunion.pdf>
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flower_Communion
 - <http://www.unitaria.cz/unitarstvi/kvetinova.html>

National & Cultural:

- Juneteenth Day - June 19
 - <http://mentalfloss.com/article/501680/12-things-you-might-not-know-about-juneteenth>
 - <https://www.kidsplayandcreate.com/juneteenth-facts-for-kids-black-history-month-for-kids/>
 - https://www.buzzfeed.com/erinwinkler/tips-for-talking-to-children-about-race-and-racism?utm_term=.ah7BXvry4#.kpZQL5Jbm
 - <http://www.pbs.org/parents/expert-tips-advice/2018/02/teaching-child-black-history-month/>
- Celebration of the Senses Day - June 24
 - <http://every-day-is-special.blogspot.com/2014/06/june-24-celebration-of-senses-day.html>
 - <https://www.livescience.com/60752-human-senses.html>
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=G8X9FPNuQIQ

Add On Resources from Katie Covey

Katie creates curriculum distinct from Soul Matters. You can learn more about all she offers at www.uure.com If you have purchased her curriculum, here are sessions from it that relate to the theme of Blessing.

Elementary ages

From Spirit of Adventure:

Session #35 Blessing of the Animals

From Picture Book UU:

Session #34 - Miss Rumphius

Session #35 - God In Between

From Picture Book World Religions

Session #7 Islam - Sitti's Secrets

Session #8 Islam - Fasting and Dates

Session #12 Buddhism: Buddha in the Garden

Session #14 - Buddhism: Zen Shorts

Youth

From Lodestone, Magnetize Your Middle School

Race Unit

Session R#4 - Finding Hope

UU Unit

Session #UU3 - Chalice in a Bag

Death Unit

Session #D3 - Death Clarifies Life

Holiday Unit

Session #H6 - Flower Communion

Leader Resources

Come play and think together!

May Online Zoom Labs

RE Brainstorming Lab on Soul Matters themes

TBA for the end of summer. Have a good one everyone!

RE Implementation Lab for Blessings (June Packet)

Wednesday, May 16, 2018, 1 p.m. ET (Last one before the summer!)

Katie offers highlights of the Blessing/June Packet and we share ideas on how we are implementing the theme.

Note: The above Soul Matters RE Labs are on the First and Third Wednesdays of each month. We set them at a consistent time, so you can put them into your calendar and plan ahead.

- First Wednesday - Brainstorming Lab on theme in 2 months
- Third Wednesday - Implementation Lab on the upcoming month's theme.
- Implementation Labs are posted on the Soul Matters YouTube Channel at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCe2pmT_ATh-pbkjF2m7rfOA

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 on-going 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 Blessing. Images and links to the books, videos, activities and more as mentioned in this packet.

<https://www.pinterest.com/soulmattersre/2018-blessings-june/>

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/>



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Learn how to join at <http://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com>