

PK-1st Grade/ Ages 4-7 & 2nd-3rd Grade/ Ages 7-9

Wonder Box Options: They will find: A Mirror

Say in your own words: This month at church we are talking about **Presence**.

If you look in this mirror you can see yourself being present in this room with me.

Point the mirror toward them or let them pass it around the room.

Right now you are all here in the room with me and that is one way of being present: present with your body. What you are thinking and feeling also affects your presence. Have you ever thought so hard about something else or someplace else, that you kind of forget where you are? Learning how to be fully present in the moment means using your senses to focus on where you are right now.

Giving now your full attention. Learning how to be present can help us become the people we want to be. Learning to be present can help us work through strong feelings. When things happen that might make us feel scared, angry or sad, knowing how to be present to work through your emotions can help you from feeling overwhelmed or lost in those feelings. Taking deep breaths to calm yourself is one way you might have already used in your life to be present.

Our Unitarian Universalist principles tell us to search for what is true and right in life and to keep learning together. So today we are going to learn how to be more present.

Read or Read Together: Take turns out loud.

[The Three Questions by Jon J. Muth](#) and/or [No Ordinary Apple](#): A Story about Eating Mindfully

Discussion Questions:

What was the most important thing?

Being present is focusing and paying attention to what is happening right now and who you are with and what you should be doing.

Why is it sometimes hard to be present? What can you discover when you are present?

More Books to Read on Presence Practice:

[Take the Time: Mindfulness for Kids by Maud Roegiers](#)

[The Lemonade Hurricane: A Story of Mindfulness and Meditation by Licia Morelli](#)

-Great introduction to the idea of meditation for ages 4-6 years old

[Peaceful Piggy Meditation](#) by Kerry Lee MacLean. (Best for Ages 7-9)

[A Quiet Place](#) by Douglas Wood

[Silence](#) by Lemniscates

Activity Ideas:

Eat an Apple Mindfully- Have each child follow the steps in [No Ordinary Apple](#) and experience their own extraordinary apple.

[Meditation Is an Open Sky: Mindfulness for Kids](#) by Whitney Stewart, Sally Rippin

-Good Description of what mediation is, followed by simple instructions for meditation for friendship, wisdom, decision making, etc.. Have the students choose one and try it together.

[A Handful of Quiet: Happiness in Four Pebbles](#) by Thich Nhat Hanh

-This book has instructions for a hands-on pebble meditation that I highly recommend.

[MAKE "Be Here Now" Signs](#)

[Mindful Coloring Pages](#)

2nd-3rd Grade/ Ages 7-9 & 4th-5th Grade/ Ages 9-11

Introduction:

Right now you are all here in the room with me and that is one way of being present: present with your body. What you are thinking and feeling also affects your presence. Have you ever been riding in a car and your mind wanders and you find that you kind of forget where you are? Learning how to be fully present in the moment means using your senses to focus on where you are right now. **Giving now your full attention.**

Did you know that learning how to be present can help us become the people we want to be? Learning to be present can help us understand and work through our feelings. When things happen that create strong feelings, it is easy to get lost in your emotions and forget about who you are, who you want to be and what you want to do. Knowing how to be present with yourself can help you recognize the feelings you are having.

If we know how to focus ourselves, no matter what is happening, we can make good choices for ourselves. If we practice being present, we prepare our minds and bodies to be able to answer the question: What do I really want to do?

How many of you have heard of or tried mediation?

Mediation or mindfulness is a way to practice being present. There are lots of ways to mediate!

Mediation and mindfulness is not just sitting still, there are many ways to be mindful.

Our Unitarian Universalists principles tell us to search for what is true and right in life and to keep learning together. So today we are going to learn together how to be more present.

Read Together: Students volunteer to read out loud.

[Three Questions](#) by Tolstoy or [The Three Questions by Jon J. Muth](#)

Activity Ideas:

Ask a congregant or community member to teach Tai Chi or Laughter Yoga

[Sitting Still Like a Frog](#) by Eline Snel

Creative fun mindfulness exercises for all ages. My favorites include: I Am From Mars, Personal Weather Report, and Little Box of Worries . Plus, the book includes a CD with guided exercises, a great resource for parents!

Walking Meditation

Eat an Apple Mindfully- Have each child follow the steps in [No Ordinary Apple](#) and experience their own extraordinary apple.

Meditation Is an Open Sky: Mindfulness for Kids by Whitney Stewart, Sally Rippin

-Good Description of what mediation is, followed by simple instructions for meditation for friendship, wisdom, decision making, etc.. Have the students choose one and try it together.

A Handful of Quiet: Happiness in Four Pebbles by Thich Nhat Hanh

-This book has instructions for a hands-on pebble meditation that I highly recommend.

PK-1st Grade/ Ages 4-7 AND 2nd-3rd Grade/ Ages 7-9

Introduction:

In preparation have the words PRESENTS and PRESENCE on a newsprint pad, white board, or large piece of paper visible to all the students.

Say in your own words:

Today we are going to talk about two words that sound a lot alike, PRESENTS and PRESENCE.

Let's spell these words out together. *Spell each word out loud with the students.*

This one, *present*, means a gift. Take a moment and think of a good present or gift.

Now whisper in your neighbor's ear what good present or gift you are thinking of.

Give children some time to accomplish this task, no more than 5 minutes.

Go Around and have each child share what gift was named if time allows.

Now let's talk about Presence. Does anyone know what Presence means?

Affirm and Discuss Answers and Stories

PRESENCE means being HERE, *describe where you are together out loud.*

Right now you are all here in the room with me and that is one way of being present, present with your body. What you are thinking and feeling also affects your presence.

Today we are going to talk about the great present of presence. Ok, let's now open the wonder box.

Wonder Box Options:

They will find: Clock and Heart

Say in your own words:

What a strange thing to find in our wonder box. Why do you think there is a clock and heart in our box and what does it have to do with Present and Presence (*point to each word*). *Discuss.*

Here is a riddle for you.

What is priceless and worth more than anything you can buy and all the money in the world?

The greatest gift you can give is your time (the clock) and it's your love (heart).

When you take time to be with someone and you make a connection then you have given a gift that can never be lost or broken. You have given them your presence, yourself.

Our Unitarian Universalists principles tell us that everyone is important and that we should care for one another to make the world a better place. Giving of yourself, your presence by listening to someone with your eyes, ears, minds and hearts is a way to care for each other.

READ One or More:

[Papá and Me](#) by Arthur Dorros

[The Smallest Gift of Christmas](#) by Peter H. Reynolds

[What Does It Mean to be Present?](#) By Rana DiOrio

[Give Love](#) by Denise Tracy

[Have You Filled A Bucket Today?](#) By Carol McCloud

Discussion Questions:

What gifts were given in this story?

Why are these important gifts?

What gifts of presence can you give to your family / friends/ church / school?

Activity Idea:

[Silent Interviews](#)

Create Gift Certificates of Time

[Make Greeting Cards](#)

[Joys and Concerns](#)

[Plan A Faith In Action: Giving the Gift of Time](#)

[Bucket Filling for Everyone](#) (for Students who can read & write)

The Present of Presence**4th-5th Grade/ Ages 9-11**

Introduction:

Today we are going to talk about two words that sound a lot alike, PRESENTS and PRESENCE.

Let's spell these words out together. *Spell each word out loud with the students.*

This one, *present*, means a gift. Now let's talk about Presence. Does anyone know what Presence means? *Affirm and Discuss Answers*

PRESENCE means being HERE, *describe where you are together out loud.*

Right now you are all here in the room with me and that is one way of being present, present with your body. What you are thinking and feeling also affects your presence.

Today we are going to talk about the great present of presence.

Read or Read Together: Take turns out loud. [Give Love](#) by Denise Tracy

Say in your own words: [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#) is a famous Unitarian minister, thinker and writer who lived 1803 –1882. This story is about Ralph Waldo Emerson and his daughter, Ellen Tucker Emerson.

Discussion Questions:

What gifts of presence can you give to your family / friends/ church / school?

Activity Ideas

[Play Two Truths and A Lie](#)

Make Get Well Cards

[Silent Interviews](#)

Create Gift Certificates of Time

[Make Greeting Cards](#)

[Joys and Concerns](#)

[Plan A Faith In Action: Giving the Gift of Time](#)

PK-1st Grade/ Ages 4-7 & 2nd-3rd Grade/ Ages 7-9

Wonder Box Option: They will find: A Jingle Stick

Say in your own words: Can any of you name a holiday song that has bells in it? (Jingle Bells) Did you know the song Jingle Bells was written by a Unitarian named James Pierpont? Today we are going to read a story about James Pierpont and think about how music can make us aware, more present in the moment. All this month at church we are talking about Presence. Listening to music can make us feel our presence in a unique way. Singing, playing and listening to music can focus us on what is happening right now.

READ One or More:

[Jingle Bells: How the Holiday Classic Came to Be](#) by John Harris

Activity Ideas

[Jingle Bell Sticks 1](#) or [Jingle Bell Sticks 2](#) or [Jingle Shakers](#)

[Jingle Bell Jewelry](#)

Sing & Dance to Jingle Bells

2nd-3rd Grade/ Ages 7-9 & 4th-5th Grade/ Ages 9-11

Introduction:

Consider playing these songs or pieces songs while introducing them:

"Jingle Bells"

"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day,"

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear."

"Do You Hear What I Hear?"

All this month at church we are talking about Presence. Listening to music can make us feel present in a unique way. The month of December is filled with holiday music that evokes memories in us. Singing, playing and listening to music can focus us on what we are experiencing right now. However, these songs also connect us to our memories of the song and the songwriters of the past. Music can connect the present to the past.

Did you know the song Jingle Bells was written by a Unitarian? James Pierpont, the son of a Unitarian minister, was living in Georgia at the time and feeling homesick. Many Christmas carols were written by Unitarians. You might be surprised to learn that when these songs were written while the Unitarian authors were feeling and responding to fear and despair. They expressed the emotions through poetry and music. What was their message to us? Is it one we still can use in this present day?

Unitarian Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote the poem "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," on Christmas in 1863 during our long Civil War. His wife had died and his son was injured in the war. Yet the final stanza of his poem, "Christmas Bells" reads like this:

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong, And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

In 1848, Edmund Sears, a Unitarian minister, wrote a new Christmas carol called, "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear." With wars happening in Europe and the United States at war with Mexico, Rev. Sears wrote a carol that urges us to hear the angels sing of peace on earth and goodwill to all. His song, like Longfellow's poem, proclaims, "Peace on Earth, good will to men".

"Do You Hear What I Hear?" was written by Unitarian Noel Regney during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. This was a time when the United States was fearful of our neighbor country Cuba. Many people were afraid of Cuban missiles and nuclear war. This song is also a call for peace:
"Said the king to the people everywhere!
Listen to what I say Pray for Peace, people everywhere!"

Next time you hear these songs, try and remember that this inspiring music came out of sadness. The authors turned their fear into a message of peace for us all. The message of Peace on Earth, goodwill to all, we still are working toward in this present day.

If you wrote a song of peace, what would the words be and what would it sound like?

READ

[Jingle Bells: How the Holiday Classic Came to Be](#) by John Harris

Activity Ideas

Write a Holiday Song Collaborative or in small groups

[Jingle Bell Sticks 1](#) or [Jingle Bell Sticks 2](#) or [Jingle Shakers](#)

[Jingle Bell Toss](#)

Sing & Dance to Jingle Bells

Listen to some of the holiday music written by Unitarians

Write A Holiday Song Collaborative or in small groups

December 2016 Children's Chapel Resources



Sacred Presence Introduction:

December is a month filled with holidays. Let's try and name some of them! (Kwanzaa, Hannukah, Solstice, Christmas, Yule, Bodhi). There is something truly sacred about all the holidays that are present in December.

Most people consider a decorated conifer tree in December a *Christmas Tree*. Christmas is a Christian holiday that celebrates the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. However, the tradition of a decorated conifer tree is an ancient pagan ritual. Additionally, the reason we have indoor Christmas trees in many homes of the United States is due to a Unitarian named Charles Follen. Charles Follen brought the tradition of having an indoor Christmas tree, from his childhood in Germany to the United States in 1832. Over time, people have an interesting way of mixing sacred holidays together. This mixture creates traditions that become part of our culture.

In the Northern hemisphere, Winter Solstice is the day with the fewest hours of sunlight in the whole year, it is the first day of Winter. The night of Winter Solstice is the longest night of the year. It also is the beginning of longer days, more sunlight with the promise of summer to come. The seasons have always affected the lives of all humankind. Winter solstice has been celebrated for most of human history in a variety of religions. Many of the sacred holidays that are present in December are connected to the shared experience of being human and living with the patterns of the earth. As Unitarian Universalist today, we continue exploring our shared human heritage as we search for truth and meaning. We endeavor to do this authentically with respect for all in our human family.

Story:

[Charles Follen's Christmas tree](#)

[How the Christmas tree came to New England by Dan Harper](#)

[A Solstice Tree for Jenny by Karen Shragg](#)

[The Shortest Day: Celebrating the Winter Solstice](#) by Wendy Pfeffer

[The Winter Solstice](#) by Ellen Jackson

[Christmas Makes Me Think](#) (about others) by Tony Medina

[On Hanukkah](#) by Cathy Goldberg Fishman

[A Room for Little One](#) by Martin Waddel

[Together for Kwanzaa](#) by Juwanda G. Ford

[List of DIVERSE CHRISTMAS BOOKS FOR KIDS](#)

Activity Ideas-

[Rainbow UU Ornaments](#)

[Collaborative Art Making: Holiday Tree with Branches & Ribbon](#)

[Cinnamon Stick Christmas Ornaments](#)

[Fir Tree:](#) Made Strips of Paper/Ribbon with Messages of hope, good will and kindness.

Christmas Tree Relay Game - Each team was given a roll of tissue paper and ornaments to decorate one person from their team to look like a Christmas tree.

Written by Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson