



Soul Matters

What does it mean to be a
people of HOPE?

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Welcome

Welcome to the Soul Matters RE Packet for December's theme of "What Does it Mean to be a People of Hope?"

Does it feel like you just hope to make it through the month? December becomes crammed like a cafeteria of holidays to choose from. Creative religious educators have no problem coming up with great ideas for church families to trim the sanctuary tree, make homemade gifts, and how about Kwanzaa, Bodhi Day, Hanukkah, Chalica, Advent, Posadas, St. Lucia's Day, and Yule. It's the implementation of these great ideas which causes the rub. I ended up the coordinator for way too many activities. Plus, there are really only 3 "usable" Sundays in December this year, given the two Sundays which fall on Christmas Eve Day and New Year's Eve Day.

That's why I like thematic ministry for RE. How are we a people of Hope? The theme gives us and those we serve a focus. In your ministry to your congregation, is it more important to make handmade dreidels in your basement at 10 p.m. for Hanukkah, or to guide children, youth and families toward a reflection on Hope? I know you know the answer. I figured it out eventually.

I invite you to sit back, and think about what ways you would like to serve the children, youth and families, and all learners if you are lifespan, for the theme of Hope. For me, I wanted the church families to come to their faith community for Christmas Eve with carols and candlelight. The RE Committee pleaded for no more to do, so we worked up the No-Rehearsal Christmas Pageant. It fits right in with the theme of Hope, and tells the story of the birth of a babe in a manger, and the hope for peace. I've included a link to the basic pageant, with photos from past years. Maybe for you, it is the drumming in of the Solstice, as it was mentioned in our Hope Brainstorm Lab by Lynn Lee, Topeka, KS. Choose activities which will be meaningful for your families.

Emily Dickinson's poem, Hope, gives us the image of "that thing with feathers/ that perches in the soul..." May your winter season be as beautiful and soothing to you and your families!

Katie

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Calendar Connections

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

Interfaith:

- [Advent](#) (Christian) December 3 -24 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Chalica](#) (UU) - Dec 4 -10
- [Bodhi Day](#) (Buddha's Enlightenment) - Dec 8
- [Hanukkah](#) (Jewish) - Dec 12 – 20 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Yule](#), Solstice (Pagan/Wiccan) - Dec 21
- Christmas Eve - Dec 24 (Sunday)
- Christmas Day - Dec 25 (Monday)
- Watch Night/Freedom's Eve (Christian) - Dec. 31
- Kwanzaa - Dec 26 - Jan 1 (more [here](#) and [here](#))

National & Cultural Observances:

- [Drunk](#) and [Drugged](#) Driving Prevention Month
- [Seasonal Depression](#) Awareness Month
- [World AIDS Day](#) - Dec. 1
- International Day of [Persons with Disabilities](#) - Dec. 3
- [Human Rights Day](#) - Dec 10th
- Anniversary of [Sandy Hook](#) Shootings - Dec 14th

Important Historical Events:

- [Rosa Parks](#) Arrested - Dec. 1 (1955)
- [Montgomery's buses](#) are desegregated - Dec. 21 (1956)

For Fun and On the Fringe:

- [Nobel Prize](#) Day - Dec 10
- How [the Grinch](#) Stole Christmas shown for first time - Dec 18, 1966
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOrN2gkhB9A>
- [Festivus](#) for [the rest of us](#) – Dec 23
- Copyright registration of Star Trek [theme song](#) - Dec 27, 1966
 - Star Trek is credited with the first interracial kiss on prime-time television in the US and the first African American actor in a main character on prime time

Stories for All Ages

A Lamp in Every Corner.

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/miracles/session-6/lamp>

Share this classic story of light and the hope of creating a Unitarian Church in Transylvania to which the people brought their heirloom oil lamps. Use a kerosene lamp as a prop and dig out any embroidery from a Partner Church.

U.U. Advent Calendar

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/image/uu-advent-calendar>

Tell the U.U. involvement in the winter holidays with this colorful Advent calendar. Create your favorite images in a PowerPoint to use as a Story for All Ages. Invite families to download it themselves and use it at home.

Elijah's Angel: A Story for Chanukah and Christmas

by Michael J. Rosen (Author), Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson (Illustrator)

<https://www.amazon.com/Elijahs-Angel-Story-Chanukah-Christmas/dp/0152015582>

A child's vision of religious tolerance is exquisitely played out in this story about an elderly Christian barber and a Jewish child who befriends him. As a hobby, the African American barber makes elaborate woodcarvings--many of which refer to events or characters in the Bible. Michael, a 9-year-old Jewish boy, often visits the barbershop just to admire old Elijah's carvings, especially that of Noah's Ark--a story that belongs to Jewish as well as Christian teachings. One day when Hanukkah and Christmas coincidentally overlap, Elijah gives Michael a special gift, a carved guardian angel. Immediately Michael is filled with a jumble of feelings--gratitude for such a beautiful gift, concern that his parents might disapprove, and an even greater fear that God may frown upon a Christmas angel, "a graven image," in Michael's home.

Song for All Ages

(Hymns and songs that can be used as a Story for All Ages)

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

The story of pain and hope behind hymn #240 in Singing the Living Traditions

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/don-meyer-phd/i-heard-the-bells-on-chri_b_2316476.html

"I Heard the Bells On Christmas Day" (1865). Unitarian Poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Wrote "Christmas Bells" (a poem later set to music and renamed "I Heard the Bells On Christmas Day") just months before the end of the Civil War. The poem captures the despair felt by the nation after years of war. Drawing on his own experience of having hope restored after tragedy, the final verse celebrates the awesome resilience of people who endure all manner of grief and misery yet find ways to confidently hope toward a day of "peace on Earth."

Book Recommendations

One Candle

by *Eve Bunting (author) and Wendy Popp (illustrator)*

[https://www.amazon.com/One-Candle-Eve-](https://www.amazon.com/One-Candle-Eve-Bunting/dp/0060085606/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505843433&sr=1-1&keywords=one+candle+by+eve+bunting)

[Bunting/dp/0060085606/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505843433&sr=1-1&keywords=one+candle+by+eve+bunting](https://www.amazon.com/One-Candle-Eve-Bunting/dp/0060085606/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505843433&sr=1-1&keywords=one+candle+by+eve+bunting)

For one family the traditional Hanukkah celebration has a deeper meaning. Amidst the food and the festivities, Grandma and Great-Aunt Rose begin their story -- the one they tell each year. They pass on to each generation a tale of perseverance during the darkest hours of the Holocaust, and the strength it took to continue to honor Hanukkah in the only way they could. Their story reaffirms the values of tradition and family, but also shows us that by continuing to honor the tragedies and the triumphs of the past there will always be hope for the future. Tell this story with a candle to light.

The One Day House

By *Julia Durango, illustrated by Bianca Diaz*

<https://www.amazon.com/One-Day-House-Julia-Durango/dp/1580897096>

Wilson wishes that one day he will be able to help Gigi in many ways. He says that one day he will paint her house yellow like the sun, but Gigi assures him that he is all the sunshine she needs. Wilson wants to build a fence for her yard, fix her stairs so she can climb them again, fix her piano so it can be played once more. He wants to create a garden for her and fix her roof. There are so many things to fix and Wilson can't do them by himself. Luckily though, Wilson asks for help and the community turns out to help Gigi and have Wilson's wishes for her come true. Inspired by an action day in the community the author lives in, this book shows the power of community to help the elderly and those with disabilities live in safe and functional homes. Details on this sort of community involvement is offered in the Author's Note at the end of the book.

How to Heal a Broken Wing

by *Bob Graham*

[https://www.amazon.com/How-Heal-Broken-Wing-](https://www.amazon.com/How-Heal-Broken-Wing-Graham/dp/0763698415/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505847211&sr=1-1&keywords=how+to+heal+a+broken+wing)

[Graham/dp/0763698415/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505847211&sr=1-](https://www.amazon.com/How-Heal-Broken-Wing-Graham/dp/0763698415/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505847211&sr=1-1&keywords=how+to+heal+a+broken+wing)

[1&keywords=how+to+heal+a+broken+wing](https://www.amazon.com/How-Heal-Broken-Wing-Graham/dp/0763698415/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505847211&sr=1-1&keywords=how+to+heal+a+broken+wing)

In a spare urban fable, Bob Graham brings us one small boy, one loving family, and one miraculous story of hope and healing.

Lost and Found Cat: The True Story of Kunkush's Incredible Journey

by *Doug Kuntz (Author), Amy Shrodes (Author), Sue Cornelison (Illustrator)*

[https://www.amazon.com/Lost-Found-Cat-Kunkushs-](https://www.amazon.com/Lost-Found-Cat-Kunkushs-Incredible/dp/1524715476/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505847487&sr=1-1&keywords=lost+and+found+cat+the+true+story+of+kunkush%27s+incredible+journey)

[Incredible/dp/1524715476/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505847487&sr=1-](https://www.amazon.com/Lost-Found-Cat-Kunkushs-Incredible/dp/1524715476/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505847487&sr=1-1&keywords=lost+and+found+cat+the+true+story+of+kunkush%27s+incredible+journey)

[1&keywords=lost+and+found+cat+the+true+story+of+kunkush%27s+incredible+journey](https://www.amazon.com/Lost-Found-Cat-Kunkushs-Incredible/dp/1524715476/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505847487&sr=1-1&keywords=lost+and+found+cat+the+true+story+of+kunkush%27s+incredible+journey)

Unfortunately, there's no shortage of heartbreaking stories in the news about refugee families desperately searching for new homes in a world turned upside down by conflict. But sometimes harrowing tales have happy endings and many involve simple but indelible acts of kindness and hope. This book tells the true story of an Iraqi refugee family whose beloved cat, Kunkush, travels with them as far as Greece, hidden away for safety. But he's lost at some point in the journey, and the heartbroken family must go on. Amazingly, Kunkush resurfaces, a worldwide community of kind hearted folks scour the scattered refugee world via the Internet. This remarkable true story is told by the real people involved, with the full cooperation of Kunkush's family.

A Child's Garden: A Story of Hope

by *Michael Foreman*

<https://www.amazon.com/Childs-Garden-Story-Hope/dp/1406325880>

Master storyteller Michael Foreman has created a timely and moving story of a child creating a garden of hope in the midst of poverty and war. A boy's world is ruin and rubble, with a wire fence and soldiers separating him from the cool hills where his father used to take him as a small child. Can a tiny, green plant shoot give him hope in a bleak landscape?

Sessions

Session 1 Birds and Hope (International Day of Disability Options)

Young Children (P - K)

Wonder Box

Place inside: a feather or small bird ornament

What is in the wonder box? It is a feather! The feather stands for hope. One Unitarian poet named Emily Dickinson wrote a poem about hope:

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -...

Some of us put birds as ornaments on our Christmas tree. Why is that? It is because we hope for peace and goodwill. We hope that all of us are treated kindly.

Story

Lemon the Duck

By Laura Backman (Author), Laurence Cleyet-Merle (Illustrator)

https://www.amazon.com/Lemon-Duck-Laura-Backman/dp/1897550251/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1506003416&sr=1-1&keywords=Lemon+the+duck

This gorgeous picture book is based on the inspirational story of Lemon the Pekin duck (as seen on MSNBC and in TIME for Kids), who was born in an elementary school classroom. Neurological issues make Lemon unable to walk, but with the support of a compassionate teacher and her students, Lemon is still able to become one happy duck!

Every Day Birds

by Amy Ludwig VanDerwater (Author), Dylan Metrano (Illustrator)

https://www.amazon.com/Every-Day-Birds-Ludwig-VanDerwater/dp/0545699800/ref=pd_sim_14_5?encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=YF4R10NVZNKSAHMQW0VY

Poetry about birds: "Chickadee wears a wee black cap./ Jay is loud and bold./ Nuthatch perches upside-down. Finch is clothed in gold."

Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah

By Laurie Ann Thompson (Author), Sean Qualls (Illustrator)

<https://www.amazon.com/Emmanuel's-Dream-Story-Emmanuel-Yeboah/dp/044981744X>

Born in Ghana, West Africa, with one deformed leg, he was dismissed by most people—but not by his mother, who taught him to reach for his dreams. As a boy, Emmanuel hopped to school more than two miles each way, learned to play soccer, left home at age thirteen to provide for his family, and, eventually, became a cyclist. He rode an astonishing four hundred miles across Ghana in 2001, spreading his powerful message: disability is not inability. Today, Emmanuel continues to work on behalf of the disabled.

Mindfulness

Invite the children to sit far enough apart so they can spread out their wings without hitting their neighbor.

Listen to the bell with me until the sound disappears. We sit quietly together and imagine that we are a beautiful bird flying across the sky. If you have room, spread out your wings, little birds. We are so peaceful and beautiful that when people see us, we give them hope. We sing a little bird song -coo, coo, coo and are peaceful and beautiful. We fly down, fold our wings, and sit quietly on our branch. We listen to the quiet...we coo, coo our hopeful song.

Invite the children to quietly coo, coo.

Ring the bell one last time.

Fingerplays

This is the dove house up so high

With its peaked roof against the sky.

These are the doves all gray and white.

(Flutter hands)

They live in the dove house snug and tight.

Coo says the doves as they fly away.

Coo says the white dove.

(Flutter right hand)

Coo says the gray dove.

(Flutter left hand)

Coo, coo, coo, as they walk about.

Eating the corn that we threw out.

(Eating motion.)

Dancing Song

Play the tune "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" by Israel "IZ" Kamakawiwo'ole

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1bFr2SWP1I>

Invite the children to be birds and fly over the rainbow. Invite them to fly with all the children, including ones with disabilities, just as Lemon the Duck was a part of the classroom.

Arts and Crafts

Dove Crafts

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/birds-doves.htm>

The Dove is a symbol of hope. Make a dove for your tree.

Game

Find the bird

Invite the children to be good listeners when they go outside to look for birds. Have them close their eyes and listen for a "Shh, shhh, shhh" sound. The leader quietly goes to a corner of the room and makes the sound. The children keep their eyes closed and point to where they think the sound is coming from. Then they open their eyes and see if they are correct. The leader moves to several places and gets quieter and quieter with the sound.

Invite the children outdoors for a Bird walk, and suggest that they play the game outdoors.

"Sunshine"(connection with nature and our bodies)

Bird Walk

Take a walk outside with the little birds in your room. Make sure the walk is accessible to all children. Listen for birds and point them out. See if the children can see any birds. Play the Game above.

Service

Hang a dove ornament on the congregational Christmas Tree.

Elementary Aged Children (1 - 5th)

Reflections

Prop: a real bird, a bird ornament, a feather

The theme this month is “How are we a people of Hope?” One Unitarian poet named Emily Dickinson wrote a poem about hope:

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -...

Show the bird or feather. The dove is a symbol of hope. It is used as a symbol of peace as well. Pass the feather around and brush it on your cheek or arm.

What would that gentle brush feel like if you were needing hope? A hug or pat.

How can we be people of hope?

Can we bring hope to others?

Can we find hope inside?

Story

Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah

By Laurie Ann Thompson (Author), Sean Qualls (Illustrator)

<https://www.amazon.com/Emmanuel-Dream-Story-Emmanuel-Yeboah/dp/044981744X>

Born in Ghana, West Africa, with one deformed leg, he was dismissed by most people—but not by his mother, who taught him to reach for his dreams. As a boy, Emmanuel hopped to school more than two miles each way, learned to play soccer, left home at age thirteen to provide for his family, and, eventually, became a cyclist. He rode an astonishing four hundred miles across Ghana in 2001, spreading his powerful message: disability is not inability. Today, Emmanuel continues to work on behalf of the disabled.

The Brave Little Parrot

By Rafe Martin, a Buddhist Jataka tale

https://www.amazon.com/Brave-Little-Parrot-Rafe-Martin/dp/039922825X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1506008927&sr=1-1&keywords=The+Brave+Little+Parrot

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPnY9_l8AEw

When a raging fire threatens to burn down the forest, all of the animals run away in fear. All except for one brave little parrot, who has an idea. Help me, she cries to the elephants, beseeching them to fill their trunks with water to spray on the flames. Help me, she begs the cheetahs, even as they urge her to flee and save herself. But the brave little parrot will not be daunted. Can the determination and courage of one small bird be enough to save a forest? Finding hope in one's heart.

Song and Mindfulness

All will be Well

Words from Julian of Norwich, sung by UU minister, Meg Barnhouse

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9LwCtOm4nk>

Play the song to set the mood for a meditation on hope. Invite the group to get into a comfortable position and listen to the song. After the song, invite them to spend a few moments of silence steeped in “All will be well.”

Ring the bell to bring them back.

Craft Activity

Make an Origami Crane

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqeI94Jri1M>

For a version with speaking: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ux1ECrNDZI4>

Older children or youth often know how to fold this, and could teach it. This is an intermediate origami craft and will be too hard for most children under 8.

For children who need an easier option

Dove Crafts

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/birds-doves.htm>

Skit

The Brave Little Parrot

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPnY9_l8AEw

In small groups, create a skit of the story of the Brave Little Parrot. She held hope in her heart that she could save the forest

Memorization

*Learn something **by heart** so it is **in your heart**.*

Hope by Emily Dickinson

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -...

Invite the children to memorize the first stanza of the poem. Learn it line by line. Can they repeat it to another person? Their family? Their minister?

Game

Find the bird

Invite the children to be good listeners. Have them close their eyes and listen for a “Shh, shhh, shhh” sound. The leader quietly goes to a corner of the room and makes the sound. The children keep their eyes closed and point to where they think the sound is coming from. Then they open their eyes and see if they are correct. The leader moves to several places and gets quieter and quieter with the sound.

Invite the children outdoors for a Bird walk, and suggest that they play the game outdoors.

“Sunshine”(connection with nature and our bodies)

Bird Walk

Take a walk outside. Make sure the walk is accessible to all children. Listen for birds and point them out. See if the children can see any birds. Play the Game above. Each time we see a bird, may we be reminded of” the thing with feathers -

That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -...”

Service

Fold origami cranes to decorate the facility or tree for “hope.” or those who know how to fold could offer an “Origami Crane folding” tutorial after the service.

If they have memorized the first stanza of the “Hope” poem, can they repeat it as a chalice lighting for the congregation?

Preparing for “Invent a holiday” next week.

The Story of Chalica, hoping for a better world

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/chalica-gains-adherents>

<https://www.facebook.com/UU.Chalica>

Share the story of how Chalica was created. Since it is an invented holiday, the children can think up ways to [celebrate one principle per night for 7 nights](#), starting tomorrow and light a candle each night. How might the practice of each principle bring hope to the world? Chalica starts on the first Monday of December and ends the next Sunday. Consider sending home a short description of Chalica and a list of the seven principles. Invite families to celebrate Chalica at dinner time.

Session 2

Light and Hope (Chalica option)

Young Children (P - K)

Wonder Box

Place inside: micro- light string set (or small LED Tea light)

Micro light string set https://www.amazon.com/Battery-Powered-ITART-Wedding-Parties/dp/B01FB1CHDK/ref=pd_sim_86_1?encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=0T0ZQQPTF1Z34HYG91NW

I wonder what is in the box... (pull out the light string set) Here are some little lights. We can put them around a plant or a tree or hang them on the dollhouse. When we see the twinkling lights, the lights give us hope. Hope in the darkness. All of the winter holidays - Christmas, Hanukkah, Solstice, Chalica and Kwanzaa all use lights to give us hope in the darkness.

Story

Winter Lights; a Season in Poems and Quilts

by Anna Grossnickle Hines

https://www.amazon.com/Winter-Lights-Season-Poems-Quilts/dp/0060008172/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505841984&sr=1-1&keywords=winter+lights

Rich, luminous fabrics. Eleven miles of thread. An uncountable number of stitches. Clear, sparkling words. With these ingredients the author celebrates the lights that brighten the darkest season of our year.

Or a story from the Book Recommendations section.

Mindfulness

Say something like this:

Let's close the blinds and plug in our Winter Lights and see them twinkle. When I ring the bell, we will sit very still and listen until we can't hear it anymore. Watch the light and make a hopeful winter wish while we listen to the sound of the bell. Ring the bell.

What are you hoping for?

Songs and Fingerplays

Twinkle

What goes twinkle in the night?

Twinkle, twinkle star so bright. (twinkle by splaying fingers out and in)

What goes twinkle in the night?

Twinkle, twinkle candle light. (arms overhead and palms together to be a flame)

What goes twinkle in the night?

Twinkling is a hopeful sight. (hands over heart)

Arts and Crafts

Hope Stars

Pre-cut star shapes and add glue and glitter to them for Hope Stars. Place the glitter in a tray or casserole dish to keep it confined. Invite the children to tell you what they hope for and write it on the star.

How Many Days Paper Chain

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/chalicechildren/session32/299181.shtml>

Make a paper chain to represent the number of days until Christmas, the seven days of Chalice or whichever Winter Holiday you choose.

Tea Light Holder

Create a tea light candle holder to use as a table centerpiece or a Chalice candle holder. Purchase Playdough or make homemade salt dough. <http://livingwellmom.com/2012/02/easy-homemade-playdough-recipe/>

Invite the children to play with it, then create a little ball.

Push an LED tea light into each creation. Invite the children to decorate it with other colors, playdough snakes, and designs.

Place on small paper plates and write the child's name on the plate for taking home.

Game - Twinkling Candles

To the tune of "Ring Around the Rosy" Walk in a circle and fall down at the end.

Candles twinkle in the night

Candles twinkle oh so bright

Melting, melting

We all fall down!

"Sunshine"(connection with nature and our bodies)

Go outside and take a Light Walk. Find a variety of lighted places. The light filtering down between leaves, the light against a sidewalk, the light line next to a shadow. What kinds of light is there? The bright light of the sun, the dim light of overcast? Green plants have to hope for light to help them grow. We have to hope for light to keep us warm.

Service

Make a centerpiece candle holder as a gift to help someone else be hopeful.

Elementary Aged Children (1 - 5th)

Reflection Questions on Hope as Light

Props: a candle and a variety of winter lights for Advent, Hanukkah, Yule, Winter Solstice, Christmas tree decorating, etc.

What do you think of when you hear the word "Hope?" Being hopeful. Being positive. Hope gets us through hard times. We can hope that a grandparent will survive another year. We can hope that a bully will stop tormenting us. We can hope that we will meet new friends after we move. We can hope that a lost pet will be returned. Hope is symbolized by light. Every holiday at this season includes some kind of light - Jewish people light the Menorah for Hanukkah, Christians light Advent Candles, We put lights on our houses and Christmas Trees, there are candles as part of Kwanzaa and Chalice (a UU holiday.)

Light is a symbol of hope. There is a famous saying, "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." (Wm. L. Watkinson). This season is a season of hope and light against the dark nights.

Do you light candles in your family? How?

How does the light from candles or a campfire make you feel? Afraid? Reflective? Peaceful? Hopeful?

Why do you think it makes you feel this way? It is warm, it is dangerous, it is beautiful.

Story

The Story of Pandora - the origin of hope in Greek Mythology

Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkOPsY7Tonw>

Text - <http://myths.e2bn.org/mythsandlegends/textonly562-pandoras-box.html>

Note that hope is portrayed as a light in the video.

Flame of Learning, Chalice of Love

By Janeen Grohsmeyer in Tapestry of Faith, Creating Home, Session 2.

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/home/session2/flame-learning>

The symbol of fire and chalice combined to make our flaming chalice.

Or one of the Stories for All Ages or Book Recommendations.

Video - the hope in lights

Winter Lights, Niagara Falls, ON

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJqSawhKz14>

Why do we light lights during the winter holidays? They shine with beauty and remind us that even in the darkness there is hope. Show this meditative video to prepare for the mindfulness activity.

Mindfulness

You as Hope.

Invite the participants to move into a comfortable position. Now we will transform each of our bodies into hope. Ring the bell and listen until the sound can't be heard.

Focus your awareness on your feet, and imagine that your feet are made of light. Use your breath as well, breathing into each part of the body as you feel it fill with light.

Be aware of your legs and feel them filling with light. You are starting to glow like the figures we saw. This glow is filled with hope. Bring your awareness up into your torso. Feel your spine made of light.

Feel your heart and lungs expand with the light and hope. Let it fill your back ribs and your upper spine. Then feel it in your arms—from the upper arm all the way down to your fingertips.

Let the light soak into your neck. Feel it fill your skull. Your forehead. Your eyebrows and eyes. Your nose. Your cheeks. Your mouth has turned to light, and your tongue and teeth.

Feel your brain completely illuminated by the light and hope.

Think, "I am light and hope." Imagine yourself covered with light, glowing like a Christmas tree, a candle, and all winter lights. Imagine that you are hope, and your very presence brings hope to others. As you inhale, feel that you are breathing in particles of light. As you exhale, let the light flow out into the world. Rest for a moment in this body of light and hope.

When you are ready, take a breath and return to this room and this morning. Welcome back, hopeful lights! May you continue to bring hope everywhere you go.

Invent a holiday

The Story of Chalica, hoping for a better world

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/chalica-gains-adherents>

<https://www.facebook.com/UU.Chalica>

Share the story of how Chalica was created. Since it is an invented holiday, the children can think up ways to [celebrate one principle per night for 7 nights](#) and light a candle each night. Those who celebrated it last week might share what they developed. How might the practice of each principle bring hope to the world? Chalica starts on the first Monday of December and ends the next Sunday, which could be this Sunday. Since every winter holiday includes light, how might/did they incorporate light into their celebration of Chalica each night?

Arts and Crafts

Make candles of beeswax

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/chalicechildren/session33/299266.shtml>

or a tea light centerpiece for their table.

“Sunshine”(connection with nature and our bodies)

Go outside and take a Hope Light Walk. Notice the different qualities of light and shadow. Bright light of the sun, dim light of overcast. Light right at the edge of the shadow. If you can locate a prism, throw rainbows in the sunlight. Notice places where light shines between leaves. Feel the difference between a shadowed place where the sun is blocked, and a place where the sun is shining. Turn your face into the sun with your eyes closed. Feel the warmth on your face. Are there places where light bounces off a puddle or other source of water?

Service

String Winter Lights

Invite the children to cover a bush, the trunk of a tree, or a sign with outdoor winter lights for the season. Invite the Grounds Committee to suggest ways and offer support for the children. Or tape lights on the inside of a window, or place the electric candles in a window. LED lights take up so little electricity they could be left on all night.

Session 3

Seeds of Hope (Solstice option)

Young Children (P - K)

Wonder Box

Place inside: a pinecone or an acorn or other seed

What is in the wonder box? It is a pinecone. The pinecone is a way the pine tree carries its seeds. If we shake it, sometimes the seeds come out. This little seed means hope. Because if it lands in just the right spot, it is covered by soil, and then grows into another pine tree. It holds the hope of being a tree inside the little seed.

Story

The Everything Seed

by Carole Martignacco, illustrated by Joy Troyer

Words only - <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/loveguide/session1/168158.shtml>

Book - https://www.amazon.com/Everything-Seed-Carole-Martignacco/dp/0981724442/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1505860431&sr=1-1&keywords=The+Everything+seed

From a single seed cradled and nourished in the rich soil of space, comes the entire universe...and even you! The Everything Seed is a new myth for a new generation, one that explains to the youngest child where we, and the world around us, originated. Carole Martignacco is a UU minister

Mindfulness

Locate some batik looking sarong and other cloths and blankets to cover each child, optional. These echo the artwork in "The Everything Seed."

Listen to the bell with me until the sound disappears. We curl up like a little seed in winter, buried deep beneath the ground. (Cover the children with cloths and blankets, optional) We are waiting and waiting with hope in our hearts. We feel the hope inside that we will grow into a big tree. Slowly, slowly as the bell fades, we grow, first our leg sticks out, then an arm, then a head. We get to our knees, then our feet. Soon our arms stretch overhead. Our deepest hope has come true! We are a tree!

Fingerplays

I am a pine tree
growing up tall, (stretch)
When I first started,
I was this small. (crouch)
Then I grew bigger
and had branches wide,
(stand slowly, arms out)
And I made pine cones
with seeds inside.
(hands for pine cone)
The wind shakes my branches,
(shake arms)
And down those seeds fall,
(flutter fingers downward)
To make new pine trees
for tinsel and balls.
(point hands together for tree,
opening slowly to form ball shape)

Movement

We wish you a Merry Christmas and Ring Those Bells, Turn Around

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/chalicechildren/session32/299182.shtml>

Find the Christmas songs at the bottom of the page.

Deck the Halls Dance - hope in green things at winter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlFqnEoctI4>

Be hopeful that all the green will come back at the end of winter. Carry the greenery around the room as the children skip to the tune of Deck the Halls.

Bean and Seed Table

<http://childcentralstation.com/2011/03/oh-beans.html>

Run fingers through the seeds, pour and scoop them up. A tactile way to explore the seeds of hope!

“Sunshine”(connection with nature and our bodies)

Winter Tree Decorating for the Birds and Animals

Take a walk outside. Find a tree which has grown up from a seed. Place seeds and peanuts (if there are no allergies) to feed the hungry winter birds and animals and give them hope.

Service

Find some pretty dried plants on your walk and put them in a vase as a centerpiece for the coffee hour.

Elementary Aged Children (1 - 5th)

Reflections

Props :a large seed or bean.

A seed is a symbol of hope. Pull out the seed. The seed holds in it the hope of turning into a tree or plant. Right now it is just possibility. Someday, that possibility might turn into a big tree.

Nature is important this month because it is the month of the Winter Solstice, a natural, planetary phenomenon which ancient peoples associated with hope. If they saw the sun seeming to disappear, they would get very worried. They had to hope that it would return. Many peoples created rituals to bring back the sun and give them hope.

Just like seeds in the winter, this is a time of darkness and possibility. It is a time of rest and hibernation. It is a time for waiting.

How can we be a people of hope in this time of darkness and possibility, rest and hibernation, and waiting? We can keep hope alive by playing games, by taking care of each other, by reading books.

What way do you keep hope alive during winter?

Story

The Rebirth of the Sun

By *Starhawk in Tapestry of Faith, Love Will Guide Us, Session 11*

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/loveguide/session11/168878.shtml>

Tell this solstice story then ask the following questions from the curriculum:

I wonder why hearing "thank you" gave the sun more and more energy?

Do you suppose the sun really gets tired?

What do you suppose would happen if it was always dark without sun? Always sunny, without darkness?

I wonder how you feel when someone thanks you for something?

I wonder why it is important to remember to say "thank you?"

What gifts from nature are you grateful for?

Mindfulness

Blessings from Nature - hope for the web of life

Invite children into a comfortable position. Ring the bell. Read the blessing.

Thank you for the sun so bright,

Thank you for the moon at night,

Thank you for the stars above

Thank you for the ones we love

Thank you for the food we eat

Thank you for your love so sweet.

Or one of the nature-based mealtime blessings from the Waldorf traditions found at:

<http://www.themagiconions.com/2016/04/5-favorite-waldorf-mealtime-blessing-verses.html>

Invite them to imagine an invisible web of life that surrounds them. Imagine that you can walk on this web in the quiet. What does it feel like under your feet? Does it bounce or sway slightly? Image you are connected to all living things with this invisible web. You walk by a tree and there is a connection as the tree exhales the oxygen for us to breathe. You walk by a bird sleeping in the tree and there is a connection to the bird because it eats mosquitos and helps you. You float up into the atmosphere and you are connected to the stars, you are made of the same elements that were created during the big bang, you are made of star stuff. You float on this invisible web over the ocean, and you see the great cycle of water which makes our planet livable. You see a giant tuna and you realize that you are connected when you consume the tuna for dinner, you walk back on the invisible web to your building, float over the

roof of the sanctuary, very quietly, and feel the love and hope connecting you to each person. You return to this room, and you feel the web of life connecting you to the energy heating the room, the energy lighting the room, the energy from each person in the room. You return to your body and sit up, and let the connections fade into the background.

We can be a people of hope by recognizing the web of life all around us. We are part of this web of life. It is easy to forget in our modern culture. By remembering the web of life at mealtimes, we can have hope that the natural world will be strong and healthy.

Choose a favorite blessing and share it with the group. Invite them to share it with their family at home during these dark winter nights. You may wish to have the children write it down and make copies to take home.

Craft Activity

Make Clove Oranges - Orange fruits hold the seeds - for the Winter Solstice.

<https://www.thoughtco.com/yule-pomander-magic-2562946>

The smell of clove and oranges signals the solstice for many! Use a sharp pencil to pre-poke a small hole for the clove.

“Sunshine”(connection with nature and our bodies)

Invite them imagine the web of life from the Meditation as they walk. Can they find leaves waiting with hope on the ground to turn into soil? Can they find little holes where bugs are waiting with hope for warmer weather? Can they find little plants still growing, waiting with hope that they will be able to grow all winter? Can they find a big tree which has lost all its leaves, waiting with hope to grow new ones next spring?

Games

Balancing Games

Lay a 2x4”board, some tape, or a commercial balance beam or board on the ground or floor. If there is a seesaw on the playground, that is good, too. As the children try to balance on it, describe the Solstice as the longest night of the year. The equinoxes are the balance of Day and night. Can they be day and balance and squat down low on the Solstice when night is the longest? Call out the names of the planet positions and have them act it out.

- Winter Solstice = Day is shortest, Night is longest
- Spring Equinox = Day and Night are equal
- Summer Solstice = Day is longest, Night is shortest
- Fall Equinox - Day and Night are equal

The Web of Life Yarn Toss

Sit in a circle, outside if it is warm enough, inside if not. Toss a ball of yarn or string to each other. Hold lightly onto the yarn as you toss it to create a web. Invite each person to say their name and then make up a connection in the web of life. It can be an animal, the sky, insect, bird, or any plant. For instance, one person says, “My name is Millie. I am an eagle.” Millie tosses it. The catcher says, “My name is Jack. I am the sky holding in the air we breathe” and tosses it. The next person says, “My name is Otto. I am an otter breathing in the air. “and so on. When the yarn has been tossed to each person, note the creation of a web of life. Lay it down carefully on the ground. Each person cuts a piece of the yarn and ask the person next to them to tie it around their wrist as a reminder of how they live in the Web of Life. Invite the group to clean up the rest of the yarn.

Service

Wash some windows to maximize the sun and light which comes in, during the darkest time of the year.

Session 4

Hope and Children

(Multigen Christmas Hope Service Options)

The winter holiday season is a time for gathering as a family, and our faith communities can provide a multigenerational time to celebrate the church family. Here is a suggestion for a "No Rehearsal Christmas Pageant" which tells the Christmas Story in a simple way for U.U. congregations. It can be offered on the Sunday before Christmas or on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24. I include it here as it celebrates us as a people of Hope, for "each night a child is born is a holy night" as Fah's poem reminds us. We invoke the hope of a babe born in Bethlehem and hope for Peace on Earth, Goodwill to All People.

Young Children (P - K)

There may be a need for a program for young children during a multigenerational service.

Wonder Box

Place inside: a few figures from a Crèche - a camel, a baby, wise men, etc.. If your congregation holds a Multigenerational Winter Service, mention that it is happening at the same time. If not, simply offer this session about the Christmas story.

What is in the Wonder Box today? There are some pieces from a Crèche! A Crèche is like a Christmas dollhouse. There is a story about a baby that goes along with the Crèche. It is a story of hope in the birth of the baby. Bring out all of the figures of the crèche, and the stable and star.

Story

This is the Stable

by Cynthia Cotton (author) and Delana Bettoli (Illustrator)

https://www.amazon.com/This-Stable-Cynthia-Cotten/dp/0312384211/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1506026704&sr=1-1&keywords=This+is+the+stable

Wondrous things are happening in this humble little stable. The animals are gathering round. Shepherds and wise men and angels are coming from afar. All of them are flocking to see the Christ child, born this night in Bethlehem.

Mindfulness

Invite the children to sit and listen to the sound of a bell, a gong, or singing bowl until it disappears. Put blankets around the circle. 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."

Let's pretend that you are babies, and curl up under the blankets. When a little baby is born, the family is so happy. A little tiny baby is born, and everyone looks at them and holds them. They sing a lullaby - Rock a Bye Baby. The baby doesn't cry, now it goes to sleep.

Spend a few moments humming the lullaby.

Then, you wake up and you aren't a baby anymore, you are so much bigger! You can talk and walk, and feed yourself. Sit up with me now. Welcome back, you big kids! We are so glad you are you!

Fingerplay and Song

Clop, clop, clop went the donkey's feet,
Clop, clop, clop down the stony street.
Nod, nod, nod went Mary's head.
She was tired, and she needed a bed.
Knock, knock, knock went Joseph at the door.
"Do you have room for anyone more?"
"No, No, No!" the innkeeper said,
"I don't even have one more bed."
"Wait, wait, wait," the innkeeper said,
"You can use my stable for a bed."
"Shh, shh, shh...What is that I hear?
The cry of Baby Jesus, oh so dear!"

Dramatic Play with the Crèche

Bring out the crèche and invite the children to hold a figurine. It works best to sit on the floor. Invite the children to lay on their stomach and watch the story unfold.
Tell the legend of the Birth of Jesus as you invite the children to bring out the figurines and place them in the manger.

Movement (connection with nature and our bodies)

Invite children to move like the animals in the manger.
Donkey, cow, lamb, dove, mice, cat.

Arts and Crafts

Make their own crèche out of playdough.

Service

Invite the children to set up the Crèche on a table so that the congregation can enjoy it after the service.

Multigenerational Service for Elementary Aged Children (1 - 5th) and All Ages

Suggested elements in the multigenerational Xmas Hope Service

Create lively, sensory moments so that younger participants keep their interest.

Poems

The Night Before Christmas

By Clement Clarke Moore

Invite the congregation to recite it from memory with a reader from the pulpit. They do it by memory, the reader has the poem in front of them.

Each Night a Child is Born is a Holy Night

#616 in Singing the Living Tradition

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/signs/session5/leader-resource4>

Music

Families come to sing carols. The pageant uses 6 carols to move along the story.

O Little Town of Bethlehem #246 (3 v.)

Jesus Our Brother #243 (5 v.)

The First Nowell #237 (2 v.)

Angels We have Heard on High #231 (3 v.)

We three Kings of Orient Are #259 (4 v.)

O Come All Ye Faithful #253 (3 v.)

Plus, sing “Silent Night” for the Candle Lighting and an opening carol, like “Deck the Halls.”

In addition, this is a good time to invite youth musicians to play a piece.

The No-Rehearsal Christmas Pageant - the hope and promise of a new life

Developed by Rev. Lydia Ferrante-Roseberry and Katie Covey, Boulder Valley UU Fellowship, Lafayette, CO. adapted from a pageant by Rev. Jori Agate.

<https://goo.gl/iKtFth>

Gather headbands and bathrobes, and invite congregants to come in costume.

Candle Lighting

Sing “Silent Night” in the darkened sanctuary and light candles, passing the flame from one to the other.

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). White candles for winter lights, white and feathers for hope, white seeds?

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."

Songs/ Music

Sing this as a song or play the video to set the mood for the Chapel.

Light a Candle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9M8SmWh2Fo>

What a Wonderful World

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddLd0QRf7Vg>

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 on Hope

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.

Imagine yourself as a candle, with a white light inside of you. This is the light of hope. As you breathe in, your flame is hope, and it glows in the darkness. Each time you breath in, the light of hope grows bigger and bigger.

When you breath out, you breathe out peace and the light of peace surrounds everything around you. Remain in this place of hope and peace for ten breaths. Then I will invite the bell.

Ring the bell.

Return slowly to this room, to your body, open your eyes when you are ready. Carry the light of hope 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.

Add Ons

Resources to expand or deepen your programming. For those who have a longer program, a second hour or a Wednesday Family Night.

Religious:

- Christmas Eve - Dec 24 (Sunday)
 - <http://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/849937/5-fun-christmas-eve-traditions-with-kids>
- Christmas Day - Dec 25 (Monday)
 - <http://theimaginationtree.com/2013/12/50-family-christmas-traditions-magical-ideas.html>
- Bodhi Day (Buddha's Enlightenment) - Dec 8
 - <http://www.mindfulmum.co.uk/fun/2011/bodhi-day/>
- Yule, Solstice - Dec 21
 - <https://www.thoughtco.com/celebrate-yule-with-kids-2563007>
- Hanukkah (Jewish) - Dec 12 - 20
 - http://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/361527/jewish/Games.htm
 - https://www.lakeshorelearning.com/media/images/free_resources/teachers_corner/great

National & Cultural:

Holidays and Observances:

- International Day of Persons with Disabilities - Dec. 3
 - https://images.randomhouse.com/promo_image/9780449817445_4187.pdf
 - <http://www.lemontheduck.com/>

Historical Events:

- Rosa Parks Arrested - Dec. 1 (1955)
 - <http://bradmeltzer.com/TV-Kids-and-More/I-Am-Rosa-Parks>

For Fun and On the Fringe:

- How the Grinch Stole Christmas shown for first time - Dec 18, 1966
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOrN2gkhB9A>
- Copyright registration of Star Trek theme song (MLK was a fan of the show, and the first interracial kiss on prime-time television in the US happened on this show, and the first African American actor in a main character on prime time) - Dec 27, 1966
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdjL8WXjIGI>

Resources For General Theme Exploration

Birds and Hope

Another poet's blog

<http://www.poemfarm.amylv.com/2016/11/birds-hope-and-way-to-give.html>

Poem reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SitTvclusz0>

Study Guide of E.D.'s poems

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvgO5Lrd3T8>

Lights and Hope

Winter Lights in Japan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cS7R5k7gcAA>

Winter Holidays around the World

<http://www.blueridgenow.com/news/20111203/different-cultures-celebrate-the-season-of-light>

Seeds of Hope

What's Good in Your Hood?

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/2012/11/26/whats-good-in-your-hood-nearby-nature-and-human-hope/>

What's Good in Your Hood Workbook for Urban Nature Study

https://mdehndotorg.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/nyrp_whatsgoodinmyhood_workbook.pdf

Nature Study Ideas for Winter

<https://simplycharlottesmason.com/blog/nature-study-ideas-winter/>

Multigenerational Winter Services

UUA Worship Web Resources

<http://www.uua.org/worship/multigenerational>

Youth and Young Adult

Here are a variety of components for use in your Middle School/Sr High/Young Adult Groups. At our Brainstorming Lab on Hope, Bob Meiss, CA, shared that he was going to show the packet to the youth group in his congregation and let them pick out what interested them. They could remain self-directed yet still be a part of thematic ministry. 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 Hope"*

Reflection

Hope Life Line

Adapted from UUA, Deep Fun

Materials: Paper, pencils

Have each person draw a vertical line down the middle of their page. At the bottom of the line write "0" and your birth date, at the top write the age you expect to live to, and a date that many years in the future. On the line indicate the age you are now and what you're doing now. Write in what you hope to be doing five years from now, ten years from now. Group members can share hopes and discuss one other's hopes for the future. You may want to talk about what problems are blocking their achievement, and let the group help each other come up with solutions.

It Came Upon A Midnight Clear

A hope for peace from a minister who suffered from mental illness

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/it-came-upon-unitarian-midnight-clear>

Josh Groban singing it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiSqct-Ei80>

An excerpt from the Dictionary of UU Biography <http://uudb.org/articles/edmundhamiltonsears.html>

Read aloud, sharing a paragraph.

Though he found Wayland pleasing, Sears learned that to provide for his family he needed to serve a larger, more prosperous church. His successful ministry at the Congregational Church in Lancaster, MA 1840-47, was, however, cut short by illness and depression. Unable afterwards to preach in a voice loud enough to be heard by a large congregation or to sustain the work of a large parish, Sears returned to Wayland for a year of rest and recovery. When his health had improved, he was recalled to the Wayland ministry and served there 1848-65. With a lighter workload he spent much of his time writing.

As a student Sears had written a Christmas carol, "Calm on the Listening Ear of Night," 1834, his lyrics describing the mystical moment when the angels' anthem burst upon the silent hills and plains of Palestine. It was printed in many American hymnals. But it was his carol, "It Came upon the Midnight Clear," first performed in Wayland in 1849, that achieved lasting popularity. Writing during a period of personal melancholy, and with news of revolution in Europe and the United States' war with Mexico fresh in his mind, Sears portrayed the world as dark, full of "sin and strife," and not hearing the Christmas message:

And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring:
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.

Some have criticized "It Came upon the Midnight Clear" for its unscriptural references to "prophet-bards" and an "age of gold," and for never mentioning the Christ-child. A century after the carol was written, British carol scholar Erik Routley wrote that "in its original form, the hymn is little more than an ethical song, extolling the worth and splendor of peace among men."

What words might be written today?

This is known as the "humanist hymn." "All" it does is hold up the worth of "peace among men [humankind]." How might you answer a person who wants to emphasize only the Christ in Christmas? Be respectful, mention the divine spark in each person, the pagan origins, Jesus' teaching of loving kindness as the spirit of Christmas.

Poetry

Hope

From Tapestry of Faith, Exploring Our Values through Poetry, Workshop 7.

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/poetry/workshop7/113756.shtml>

Videos

Overcoming hopelessness | Nick Vujicic | TEDxNoviSad

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6P2nPI6CTlc&vl=en>

A limbless man shares his choice to choose hope. In the middle he shares a philosophy of life which includes a deep faith in eternity which may be different from UU youth, and his message of hope and perspective is worth sharing even so.

Roots and Wings

A Sikh 14 year old directs a video about keeping the Sikh faith and hope in the face of prejudice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLT57uOymQY>

Be sure to catch the end, which illustrates that lightheartedness is valuable to keeping up hope.

Star Trek Theme Celebration

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdjL8WXjIGI>

Copyright registration of Star Trek theme song (MLK was a fan of the show, and the first interracial kiss on prime-time television in the US happened on this show, and the first African American actor in a main character on prime time) - Dec 27, 1966

The Rosa Parks Story - arrest excerpt (Dec. 1, 1955)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPvwKP8G4sA>

Watch the excerpt. Imagine being the different people - the fellow citizens on the bus, the bus driver, the grandfather, the policeman, Rosa. What would you do?

Songs

Wyrd Sisters - Solstice Carole

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3T0i4akX5a8>

Mary Chapin Carpenter - The Longest Night of the Year

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IKcaP6wKG8>

Arts and Crafts

Yule Pomanders

<https://www.thoughtco.com/yule-pomander-magic-2562946>

Make these orange and clove balls for Yule. Fill the halls with the rich smells.

The thing with feathers... art

One Unitarian poet named Emily Dickinson wrote a poem about hope:

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -...

Create an image which reflects hope in your soul. Play the music video “Hope in Front of Me” while drawing.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KlhYZQ_oww

Listen to it with humanist “ears” and Christian “ears.” We can reach out to each other, our friends will be our hope and our light. We’ve got to believe in the power of hope. The beauty of the song is that there can be many ways to find hope.

Skits and Theatre

The Future Machine

From the Divine Theater and Dance Fahs Fellowship Project by Matt Davis

<https://divinetheateranddance.com/2015/04/11/the-future-machine/>

Make a machine with hope to solve a problem in the future.

Mindfulness

All will be Well

Words from Julian of Norwich, sung by UU minister, Meg Barnhouse

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9LwCtOm4nk>

Play the song to set the mood for a meditation on hope. Invite the group to get into a comfortable position and listen to the song. After the song, invite them to spend a few moments of silence steeped in “All will be well.”

Ring the bell to bring them back.

Games - Deep Fun games adapted for the theme of “Hope”

<https://www.uua.org/youth/library/adults-ministry/deepfun/45594.shtml>

Hope Tone Singing

Have each person close their eyes release the word ‘Hope’ on a different tone. Hold the tones as long as possible, taking staggered breaths so that the sound is constant. Listen as the voices come into harmony with each other. Note that this is similar to choral singing in which your heart beats align also. Suggested by Mary Shelton, Evanston, IL

Hope Zoom

Form a standing circle, then have everyone hold hands and squat down. As they slowly come up to standing,

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 Hope” or “What does it mean to be a family of Hope?” 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.

A Common Read

What to Do about Christmas? A Unitarian Universalist family rejects, then embraces, holiday season rituals and traditions.

By Michelle Richards, *UU World Parenting Blog*, 12/14/2015

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/what-about-christmas>

A Book and Workshop

Unplug the Christmas Machine: A Complete Guide to Putting Love and Joy Back into the Season

by Jo Robinson (Author), Jean C. Staeheli (Author)

<https://www.amazon.com/Unplug-Christmas-Machine-Complete-Putting/dp/0688109616>

A guide to reducing the commercialism of the upcoming winter holidays.

A Family Ritual

When you are lucky enough to see a rainbow, the symbol of hope, take hands and say or sing these words from "De Colores," Hymn #305 in Singing the Living Tradition:

All the colors, as a rainbow appears when a storm cloud is touched by the sun.

Y por eso los grandes amores de muchos colores me gustan a mi.

All the colors abound for the whole world around and for everyone under the sun.

Movies

Moana, Rated PG

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3521164/>

In Ancient Polynesia, when a terrible curse incurred by Demigod Maui reaches Moana's island, she answers the Ocean's call to set things right. Suggested for “Hope” by Lynnlee, Topeka, KS

Mickey's Christmas Carol (28 min.)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0085936/>

Retelling of Dickens's Scrooge story with Disney characters.

NEW Movie - The Man Who Invented Christmas, PG, to be released 11/22/17

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt6225520/>

British Unitarian Charles Dickens' writing of “A Christmas Carol”

The Rosa Parks Story

<https://www.amazon.com/Rosa-Parks-Story-Angela-Bassett/dp/B00006LPHJ>

Noting her arrest on Dec. 1, 1955

Additional 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 Hope.

Elementary ages

From Spirit of Adventure:

Session #15 - Jingle Bells

Session #16 - Winter Solstice

Session #17 - Hanukkah

From Picture Book UU:

Session #13 - Elijah's Angel

Session #17 - On the Night You Were Born

From Picture Book Bible Tales

Session #13 - Jesus

Youth

From Lodestone, Magnetize Your Middle School

Race Unit

Session #R4 - Find Hope

Holiday Unit

Session #H1 - Hanukkah

Session #H2 - Birth Legends of Jesus, Buddha, Confucius

Session #H3 - Winter Solstice

Upcoming Support & Collaboration Opportunities

Come play and think together!

October

RE Brainstorming Lab on Intention (Jan. Packet)

Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2017, 1 p.m. ET

Share ideas for what should be included in January's packet on Intention!

RE Implementation Lab for Abundance (Nov. Packet)

Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2017, 1 p.m. ET

Let's help each other think about using November's packet on Abundance in our programs!

Note: Soul Matters RE Labs are on the First and Third Wednesdays of each month.

- First Wednesday - Brainstorming Lab on theme in 2 months
- Third Wednesday - Implementation Lab on the upcoming month's theme.

On-Going Resources and Support

1. Don't forget about our RE Leader Support Facebook page.

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/54520225591601/>

2. Check out the Pinterest page on Hope.

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

<https://www.pinterest.com/soulmattersre/2017-hope-december/>

3. Offer your teachers and parents spiritual nourishment and inspiration by encouraging them to join the Soul Matters Inspiration Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>



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Packets are for use by member congregations of the Soul Matters Sharing Circle.

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