



Soul Matters

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

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Welcome to a New Year... of Online RE!

There's no getting around it. Online church is complicated. All of us are trying out new things and preparing to be flexible in the face of the unexpected challenges that will surely come our way. To support you in this new landscape of diverse and flexible programming, we've developed a new and fairly complex pedagogy to guide our work.

And yet at the same time, we've been working hard to keep our actual packets simple and user-friendly.

So, complex pedagogy and simple usage. That's our aim. That's our promise to you this year: We're going to tackle this new complicated world of online RE head on, all the while making sure we provide you with a simple structure to help you make your way.

Which means we can begin this year with enthusiasm and confidence! Yes, it's not going to be easy, but with a clear plan and by leaning on each other, it's also going to be an exciting year.

In that spirit of excitement, confidence and partnership, here's an overview of the pedagogy behind our packets and the work we plan to do for you and with you this year!

Our Pedagogy for Online RE

Our Approach in a Nutshell:

We provide...

multi-use building blocks
to support four relationally based environments/ministries
that encourage "lead-with" strategies,
build off each other,
and are tied together by a thematic & actionable through line.

Now let's tease that out piece by piece...

Multi-Use Building Blocks

Instead of four weeks' worth of class *curriculum*, our packets will now contain four sections of "building blocks" that you can use to create whatever kind of programming you offer: worship, small groups, mid-week story time, etc. Each section is designed around a particular "lesson" or angle on the monthly theme. The building blocks in each of these themed sections include:

- **"Introduce It"** - Object lessons and wonder box presentations to help leaders introduce the lesson/theme angle for the children
- **"Tell It & Talk About It"** - Stories (and some puppet scripts) to help bring the theme angle to life through storytelling
- **"Meditate on It"** - Various mindfulness practices to help children engage the theme angle in a more reflective and quiet way.
- **"Explore It"** - Small group activities and experiential learning designed for online experience. Just because we can't be together physically doesn't mean we can't play and create together online!
- **"Take It Home"** - Ideas about how to weave the theme angle into family and home life.

Four Relationally Based Environments/Ministries for Online RE

In this time of physical separation, we need to pay extra attention to the key relationships that nurture our children. So our packets support and encourage four distinct types of relationship and relationally-based environments:

1. **Leader to Child Relationship** – supported by worship programming and environments
2. **Child to Child Relationships** – supported by small group programming and environments
3. **Family Member to Family Member Relationships** – supported by home life programming
4. **Family to Family Relationships** – supported by special programming and events that bring church families together or mobilize them to engage their community

“Lead-With” Strategies

It’s difficult to create compelling online experiences. Too often leaders assume they can create those compelling moments on their own using their skill and charisma. It turns out that doesn’t always work. Remember Mr. Roger’s secret? He always pulled in guests when engaging his audience. In other words, he “led with” rather than led.

So throughout our packets we will sprinkle tips for how you can pull in children, families and other co-leaders as you present your online programming. After all, it’s fine to watch your DRE light the chalice, but if you know your DRE is inviting one of your buddy’s families to light the chalice or help tell the story, you’ll be a whole lot more excited about tuning in. If you lead online yoga for families, that’s cool, but if you recruit a family from your church to lead it alongside you, twice as many families will show up. And sure, you can do a neat science experiment to illustrate the monthly theme, but if you do it with Sandy’s mom who is a chemist, that’s definitely something kids - and parents - show up to watch!

Programming that Builds Off Each Other (i.e. “passing the baton”)

As you know, Soul Matters was founded on the idea of bringing coherence to church life through monthly themes. Themes allow us to tie the various aspects of church life together. To enhance this commitment to connected programming, we will include *programmatic* “through lines” to complement our thematic through lines. So the content and design of our RE packets supports what we call a “pass the baton” strategy. This allows what you do in worship to flow into your childrens’ small group. And what goes on in those small groups will set up and flow into your home life ministry. Which in turn will set the stage for the wider all-church activities you organize.

This is why our building blocks now include a “Take it Home” section. And why we’ve added a brand-new section called “Connecting with Other Families” which supplies you with plenty of ideas for special programming and events that bring church families together or mobilize them to engage their community.

Two Packets to Keep Things Simple

Structuring our packets around building blocks is not our only strategy to keep things simple and more user-friendly. This year we're also separating out our material for younger and older children into two separate packets!

Two Age Groupings

Each month you will receive two separate packets divided by age group and their separate needs for online faith formation:

1. Preschool – First Grades
2. Second – Fifth Grades

For youth, we distribute:

1. "[On the Road Together](#)," a senior high youth group packet filled with resources for online youth group, and
2. "[Crossing Paths](#)" a middle school curriculum that uses interfaith exploration to build UU Identity.

Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten/First Grade

We heard loud and clear that online Zoom groups aren't working well for this age group. So we're curating resources for this age group that are action and object based - like embodied meditations, arts activities and Wonder Box elements, as well as activities that employ treasure hunt and "find & show" strategies.

Second Through Fifth Grades

This age is more comfortable with online meetings than the younger children, but still needs short, active, experiential small group activities to build their relationships and keep their attention. They are already spending a lot of time online getting information handed to them, so making sure RE is experiential is extra important. With this in mind, we will be leaning on 4 strategies to ensure compelling online interactive experiences:

- Simultaneous creation (i.e. online simple creative projects one can do on the screen with others)
- Science experiment-based lessons
- Treasure hunt approaches
- "Find 'N Show" type approaches

And, of course, we've not given up on games! We will keep hunting for games that work well online. After all, spirituality without fun and silliness is, well, no fun at all! :)

Welcome to Renewal

Welcome to the Soul Matters Packet for Pre-Kindergarten through First Grades for the month of September!

This month we're exploring the many ways our UU faith invites us to become "a People of Renewal." To get at that in a way that is relatable to our young children, our sessions are centered around four special angles or lessons that outline how we are renewed.

Lesson A. Renewed by Our Church Friends (Water Communion)

Lesson B. Renewed by Differences (Anti-Racism)

Lesson C. Renewed by Wonder (Our UU First Source)

Lesson D. Renewing Our Relationships with "I'm Sorry" (Yom Kippur)

Lesson E. Renewed by Loving Our Unique Selves (Our UU First Principle - Inherent Worth)

As the pandemic stretches on and wears us down, the theme of renewal becomes an extra important focus for us. For instance, when my husband and I found out that our favorite Utah river trip had just opened up, we grabbed the chance to be renewed, just the two of us and our canoe, floating down the labyrinths of Canyonlands National Park on the Green River. We were socially distanced, no people for miles, for 5 days, camping along the riverbank. We cooled ourselves from the heat of the desert by dipping our hats and shirts in the river. We viewed the night stars. What an antidote to the worry and uncertainty of the pandemic! This was truly a time when wonder washed over us. I hope our session/lesson on wonder helps you and your families experience the same!

Focused Lessons on Anti-Racism: This summer has renewed the urgency of addressing the trauma and harm of racism. With this in mind, we're adding an additional anti-racist strategy to our packets. We've already been including diverse voices and decentering aspects to all our lessons, but this year we're going to dedicate an *entire lesson* each month to a different aspect of dismantling white supremacy. This month, that dedicated lesson focuses on reviewing the basics and renewing some of the skills needed to do the work.

Additional Lessons to Help with Summer Programming: We've included 5 lessons even though there are only 4 Sundays in September. We hope that this gives you additional lessons to use in your August programming. And remember, we also suggest checking out our [individual packets](#) on past themes to cover summer Sundays as well.

New "Lead-With" Suggestions: Besides the content in the packet, I'm also excited about the strategies we are using. For instance, I'm especially loving the "Lead With" strategies we are recommending. To make the online experience even more compelling, we have sprinkled tips for how to pull in children, families and other co-leaders as you present your online programming. For example, sharing how the Obaya family unlocks their smartphone with their fingerprint, or inviting a family to share a mishap with a ball. Just as Mr. Rogers made his programming more attractive by welcoming guests to present topics with him, we too can spice up our programming with strategically chosen co-leaders.

Online Doesn't Have to Be Boring: I'm also excited about the intentional lightheartedness and interactive activities we are bringing to the Children's Small Group experiences. It's not easy to ensure experiential learning online, but with well-researched games and interactive strategies, we hope to invite the children into a relaxed time when they can play and create with each other, thereby continuing to deepen their relationships with each other even though they can't be together in person. As we religious educators know, fun -and even silly - interaction is the glue that helps learning and relationships stick!

Looking to the Year with Confidence and a Sense of Adventure: Finally, September has always felt like New Year's to me. We come to church renewed after the warm months of summer, ready to renew friendships, activities and another year together. I can't help but think of these packets as a renewal of confidence and joy. We all have struggled to understand how to offer online faith formation during this time of pandemic. With the new approaches we've come up with - you and us together - we can now look forward to this new year with a sense of adventure and confidence, rather than worry and anxiety. We are thrilled to share this renewal of hope and possibility with you. Let the new year begin!

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

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Calendar Connections

September 2020 - Renewal

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

Interfaith:

- [Rosh Hashanah](#) - Jewish New Year - Sept. 18 - 19, 2020
- [Mabon/Autumn Equinox](#) - Wicca - Sept. 22, 2020 (more [here](#) & [here](#))
- [Yom Kippur](#) - Jewish Day of Atonement - Sept. 27, 2020, begins evening of the 26th
- [Rumi's birthday](#) - Sept. 30 (1207)
- [Al-Hijra/Muharram](#) - Islamic New Year (day and month) - begins Aug. 20, 2020

Unitarian Universalist:

- Ingathering/Water Communion Ritual - Early Sept. - date varies by congregation
- The first meeting of [the Transcendentalist Club](#) - Sept. 19 (1836) (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- Universalism Day: [John Murray](#) preaches [1st sermon](#) in US (1770) - Sept. 30 (more [here](#))

National & Cultural:

- [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (Sept. 15 - Oct. 15)
- [Suicide Prevention Month](#), World Suicide Prevention Day is Sept. 10
- [Labor Day](#) – Sept. 7 (*first Monday)
- [International Literacy Day](#) - Sept. 08
- [Grandparents Day](#) - Sept. 10
- [9-11 Remembrance](#) - Sept. 11
- [International Peace Day](#) Sept. 21 (more [here](#))
- [World Gratitude Day](#) - Sept. 21
- [Bisexual Pride Day](#), CBD, Bisexual Pride, and Bi Visibility Day - Sept. 23
- [Bisexual Awareness Week](#) - Week of September 23 ([here](#))
- Publication of [David Walker's Appeal](#) - Sept 28 (1829) (more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe:

- [Johnny Appleseed Day](#) - Sept. 26
- [Talk Like a Pirate Day](#) - Sept. 19
- [Hobbit Day](#) - Sept. 22
- [Banned Books Week](#) - Sept. 23-29 (more [here](#))

Lesson A:

Renewed by Our Church Friends (Water Communion Focus)

Theme Angle:

Our faith asks us to continually renew and recommit ourselves to our community. It also reminds us that religious community is a primary source of renewal for human beings. So what's one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of renewal? It tells us to "Recommit yourself to your church community and let your church community nourish your spirit!"

Translating This for Young Children:

Church is a place where we make friends and are renewed by being together. While young children may not get the metaphors of Water Communion, they certainly feel the connective power of blowing bubbles together and playing with water related games.

Introduce It (Wonder Box*)

Bubble Friends

In the Wonder Box: a straw or piece of tubing. Nearby: dish soap and water solution

Suggested Script:

Do you know what this is? It's a straw. We blow air through it. When we blow air through it into soapy water, we make bubbles. [Lead with component: "I've invited the Garcia family to show us how it's done."] We need some water and soap in this bowl. (Put a little soap in the water and demonstrate blowing bubbles.)

See the water swirl in the bowl?

Water is important to us Unitarian Universalists because we offer a special Water Ritual at the beginning of the year. It's called Water Communion or Water Service. We use water to remind us that we are all connected, we are all friends, just like water is connected by rain, streams, ponds, rivers, lakes, and oceans. This connection to our church friends renews our spirits and fills us with happiness.

We can't get together like we used to, but we can still be friends. We can tell stories and play games with each other.

Lead With Strategy:

Invite a family to be the ones to show their bubbles as an example.

Transition Tool - Use to shift to the next activity, or as a gathering or closing:

Soap Bubbles (1 min) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWCO_oTUIjY

Tell It & Talk About It

(Story)

Rainbow Fish Video or Reading

Video: <https://www.storylineonline.net/books/the-rainbow-fish/>

Book: [The Rainbow Fish](#) by Marcus Pfister (Author, Illustrator)

Lead With Strategy: Invite someone who keeps an aquarium to share their fish on screen and help introduce the story.

Suggested Script: What lives in the water? A fish. [Here are the pet fish of Mrs. Johnson. They live in an aquarium. Invite her to tell the children about her fish...] Here is a story about a beautiful fish who finds friendship and happiness when he learns to share. He is renewed when he learns to share. We learn from our friends at church too.

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Meditate on It

(Mindfulness Practice)

Be Water

Centering:

Begin with the Meditation Fingerplay to center the children. Invite the children to follow along:

“I wiggle my fingers, I wiggle my toes, I wiggle my shoulders, I wiggle my nose.
Now no more wiggles are left in me, so I’ll be as still as still can be.”

Now, with all the wiggles out of us, let's get into our meditation positions.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Sit up nice and tall.

Close or focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Meditation Script:

Take a deep breath and imagine you are water.

Close your eyes and feel your legs and arms and head turn into water.

You are floating with all the water in a pond. [CONSIDER INVITING THE CHILDREN TO LIE BACK]

You ripple, you wave, you swirl... Can you move your arms to ripple, to wave, to swirl? Can you spread out and be water? [Give time for children to move.]

Feel it all around you. Do you feel the freedom of floating? Allow yourself to feel as though you are rocking back and forth peacefully.

Now, slowly turn your arms into arms, your legs into legs, and your head into your head.

Remember how it felt to be water. And let's be sure to take that peacefulness with us into the day ahead.

Lead With Strategy: Who is a favorite caregiver who could read this in a loving tone?

Explore It (online small group activities and experiential learning)

Find 'N Show Bath Toys

Where can you sit in water in your house? The bath tub!

What bath toy do you love?

Invite the children to go find and then share with each other their favorite one or two bath toys.

Each child takes turns showing their bath toys to everyone.

We all have different bath toys that we love. And we all love bath toys! We are connected!

Lead With Strategy: An Ernie doll, or other puppet, like a duck, or fish who likes bath tubs!

Transition Tool - Use to pass the time while the children are finding their bath toy:

Consider playing the Sesame Street Rubber Ducky video while the children are searching.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh85R-S-dh8> (2 min)

Water Play

Invite the families to prepare a bowl with dish soap in a bowl along with a straw.

"Let's make some bubble friends! Bubbles are from water and soap. When we blow hard, the bubbles pile on together. They are bubble friends! The bubbles are friends just like the families at church are friends. We can't get together like we used to, but we can still be friends. We can tell stories and play games with each other."

When online invite the children to blow bubbles and notice how they pile on top of each other, they are a part of each other, just like we are a part of our church.

Take It Home

(Home based activities)

This section provides ideas for your weekly follow-up emails to parents, giving them some ways to build on themes and activities you did in your online worship and groups.

Family Sharing Tips & Lesson Follow Up

- **Possible Script for Email:** “Hello Parents! As you know, during the Wonder Box opening that was focused on how we are renewed by our church friends, we talked about how water is connected and we are connected to our church friends. To get at this, we watched as bubbles piled up on each other. As a follow up, consider combining water play and music play with a variety of bowls, tubes and ways to make bubbles. Use the ideas from the Water Play and Music Exploration Video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDKZdS5PFDA&t=64s> ”
- **Or Bury Bath Toys in Ice**
We shared beloved bath toys as part of small group, now freeze some in a block of ice!
<https://offspring.lifehacker.com/bury-your-kids-plastic-toys-in-ice-1844040178>
Bury some of the less beloved bath toys in ice and let the children excavate them using the suggestions in this link.

Lesson B:

Renewed by Differences

(Anti-Racism)

Theme Angle:

Our faith reminds us that we must renew our vigor in the fight against racism. In light of the current events which have catalyzed the world, we renew the energy with which we teach our children about racism. So what's one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of renewal? It tells us, "Renew your commitment to dismantling racism!"

Translating This for Young Children:

We are renewed by differences. People have different colors of skin. Some people are treated badly because of the color of their skin. That is called racism. We are working hard to make racism go away. No one should be treated badly because of the color of their skin. We are different and that makes life beautiful.

Introduce It

(Wonder Box / Object Lesson)

Green Crayon

In the Wonder Box: a green crayon/marker and a box, or if you can manage it, a whole box of green crayons/markers. On the side: a box of multicultural [crayons](#) or [markers](#).

Suggested Script:

What's in the Wonder Box today? Here's a box of crayons (or markers). I love crayons because it means I can draw a picture! Oops, there's only a green crayon! What would it be like if I could only color with one crayon? [demonstrate it or invite your co-leader]

We love having lots of different colors to draw with. [Draw with all the different colors.]

Here's a special box with lots of different colors of crayons called "multicultural." That's because there are lots of different colors of skin. [Invite your co-leader to draw various people with different skin tones.] We love the different colors of skin tones the same way we love all the different colors of crayons. And notice how wonderfully different each is. [lift up a few of the colors and point out what makes them marvelously unique] Our faith wants us to notice this about people too: how our differences are wonderful, and each difference is wonderfully unique.

Some people are treated badly because of the color of their skin. That is called racism. We are working hard to make racism go away. No one should be treated badly because of the color of their skin. We are different and that makes life beautiful.

Lead With Strategy: Invite a person who can sketch - different faces or people of different colors.

Tell It and Talk About It

(Story)

Anti-Racism Baby by Dr. Ibram X. Kendi (to be released July, 2020)

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/624774/antiracist-baby-picture-book-by-ibram-x-kendi-illustrated-by-ashley-lukashevsky/>

Theme Connection: Begin the process of understanding racial identity. Remove the stigma around talking about race and normalize these conversations.

Lead With Strategy: Invite a person who has journeyed down the road of normalizing and being comfortable with conversations on race.

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Meditate on It

(Meditation)

Shark Fin Calming

We want to normalize the conversations we have with children and race, and deal with it calmly and with gentleness. Set the stage with this calming meditation. Find it at [Classroom Mindfulness Activities, #4](#).

Centering: Begin with the Meditation Fingerplay to center the children. Invite the children to follow along:

“I wiggle my fingers, I wiggle my toes, I wiggle my shoulders, I wiggle my nose.
Now no more wiggles are left in me, so I’ll be as still as still can be.”

Now, with all the wiggles out of us, let’s get into our meditation positions.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Sit up nice and tall.

Close or focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Meditation Suggested Script:

Shark Fin excerpt:

“...Place the side of your hand on your forehead, with your palm facing out to the side.

Close your eyes.

Slide your hand down your face, in front of your nose.

Say “shhh” as you slide your hand down your face...”

Lead With Strategy: Is there a person with a calm voice who could join you?

Explore It

(small group activities and experiential learning)

We Love Differences - Online “Treasure Hunt”

Talking Points and Takeaways:

- Introduce the activity by highlighting how we love differences.
- Some people are treated badly because of the color of their skin. That is called racism. We are working hard to make racism go away. No one should be treated badly because of the color of their skin.
- It’s just different, and differences make life beautiful.

Activity:

Invite the co-leader to share their collection and point out all the differences and how they make life beautiful.

Invite the children to go on a treasure hunt and find common objects that are similar to those your guest shared to show even further wonderful differences. If you aren’t using a guest, you can have the children seek out common items that are likely to also be different in different households, i.e. a frying pan, or shoe, or something red (and/or other colors), something square (and other shapes), something soft (or hard), something rough (or soft), etc. Notice and celebrate how different each item is.

Lead With Strategy: a person with a collection of different objects (Different musical instruments they play, different spoons they have collected, different quilts they have made, etc.)

Take It Home

(Home based activities)

This section provides ideas for your weekly follow-up emails to parents, giving them some ways to build on themes and activities you did in your online worship and groups.

Family Sharing Tips & Lesson Follow Up

- **Possible Script for Email:** “Hello Parents! As you know, in small group that was focused on anti-racism, we talked about how wonderful differences are and how our faith invites us to celebrate difference. To get at this, we found all kinds of different and beautiful things on a Treasure Hunt. As a follow up, consider playing a treasure hunt of differences with all of your family members. Find something soft/hard, colors, shapes, texture, etc. Share the ways that the objects are different and each is unique.”
- **Or Watch The Skin You Live In** | StorytimeWithMsMelange
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_Bjz1xFteQ
As recommended by the [Black Lives Matter Instructional Library](#) online
- **Or Watch Sesame Street Town Hall on Racism (2 parts for a total of 50 min)**
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/06/app-news-section/cnn-sesame-street-race-town-hall-app-june-6-2020-app/index.html>
Explaining racism to children. Big Bird, Elmo and CNN newscasters talk about racism. Two part series.

Lesson C:

Renewed by Wonder

(Our First UU Source)

Theme Angle:

Our faith reminds us that wonder is a central source of renewal, so much so that we've put it in the first of our UU sources: "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life." So what's one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of renewal? It tells us to "Let wonder wash over you!"

Translating This for Young Children:

Wonder is part of our religion. We wonder about the stars, and about life. Wonder renews our spirit. It helps us remember that life is full of some many amazing and surprising things!

Introduce It

(Wonder Box*)

Wish Upon a Star

In the Wonder Box: a star

Suggested Script:

Welcome to our Wonder Box time! I've asked _____ to help me today. Hi _____. I'm so glad you're here. Can you say hi to all our friends?

What's in the wonder box? (Either pull it out yourself and invite your co-leader to answer or have your co-lead have the box or bag with them and pull it out themselves) A star!

When we look up at night, we see the stars in the sky. They make us wonder about our big questions. Questions such as how many stars are there? What does it mean to be alive? Why are we here?

Wonder is a part of our Unitarian Universalist religion. It is one of our Unitarian Universalist sources, in fact, it's number one.

I'm going to read the big words. Listen for the words "**wonder**" and "**life**" when I read and see if you can hear them. Here are the big words: "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and **wonder**, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold **life**." Lots of big words. Did you hear the word "wonder" when I read the first source? Did you hear the word "life"?

All of us wonder about things. When we wonder, we renew our spirit and feel better.

Stars make us wonder. How do you draw a star, _____?

(Invite the co-leader to draw a star using their own or [this how-to](#))

Did you know there is a special wish you can make with a star? When you see the first star of the night, you can make a wish! That is one way our wonder can renew us.

Lead With Strategy: Invite a person who can demonstrate how to draw a star to co-lead this element. This might be an older child.

Transition Tool: as children gather or move to a different section

Play this video of Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCjyiqpAuU&vl=en>

Tell It and Talk About It

(Story)

Draw Me a Star Video or Reading

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xUVKImwSAI>

Book: [Draw Me a Star](#) by Eric Carle (Author)

Here is a story about an artist who is renewed by the wonder of drawing a star, a sun, and all sorts of wonder-ful things.

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Meditate on It

(Mindfulness Practice)

Visit the Night Sky Meditation

Centering: Begin with the Meditation Fingerplay to center the children. Invite the children to follow along:

“I wiggle my fingers, I wiggle my toes, I wiggle my shoulders, I wiggle my nose.
Now no more wiggles are left in me, so I’ll be as still as still can be.”

Now, with all the wiggles out of us, let's get into our meditation positions.

Stand comfortably on the floor.

Put your hands at your sides.

Stand nice and tall.

Focus your eyes.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Meditation Script:

Take a deep breath. In and out. Now imagine you are in a spaceship, going to the night sky. We shoot up into the stars. Jump up everyone!

We see stars and galaxies all around us. Look out the window everyone! [Make binocular eyes]

We are full of wonder. Say Ahhhh! Ohhhh!

We look around and see all kinds of red stars, blue stars, golden and silver stars. We look around and there is a tiny blue green and white planet, our very own Earth. Let’s go back to our home!

We turn our spaceship around and head back home. [Turn an imaginary steering wheel]

We land our spaceship and open our eyes, happy to be able to gaze up into the night sky and see those stars full of wonder.

Lead With Strategy: Who could invite the children on a space adventure?

Explore It

(small group activities and experiential learning)

Share a Wonder Drawing

Preparation: Invite the families to prepare some drawing materials for their child.

Suggested Script: While online, invite the children to draw something full of wonder. What would a starry sky look like? A new baby? Colors, shapes, movement are all full of wonder. And then share it with each other.

Lead With Strategy: Invite someone who likes to doodle or draw.

Transition Tool - Play while drawing:

Consider playing “When You Wish Upon A Star”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTXir3wOgT4>

Take It Home

(Home based activities)

This section provides ideas for your weekly follow-up emails to parents, giving them some ways to build on themes and activities you did in your online worship and groups.

Family Sharing Tips & Lesson Follow Up

- **Possible Script for Email:** “Hello Parents! As you know, during the Wonder Box opening that was focused on how we are renewed by wonder, there was a star. With your family, seek out the night sky at dusk and see who can find the first star. Make a wish and share the wonder that is part of our religion. Share how you are renewed when you look at the stars.”
- Or explore wonder some more and watch the story: Find Wonder in Nana’s Eyes: Watch the Video Story No Mirrors in My Nana’s House, Online Video with Tia & Tamera Mowry
<https://www.storylineonline.net/books/no-mirrors-in-my-nanas-house/>
Written by: Ysaye M. Barnwell, Illustrated by: Synthia Sant James
“The beauty in this child’s world is in her Nana’s eyes. It’s like the rising of the sun...” from the Storyline Online webpage at <https://www.storylineonline.net/books/no-mirrors-in-my-nanas-house/>
(includes the song sung by Sweet Honey in the Rock!)

Lesson D:

Renewing Our Relationships with “I’m Sorry”

(Yom Kippur Focus)

Theme Angle:

As a covenantal religion, our faith places relationships, and our promises to each other at the center of our faith. As since we’re human we sometimes break those promises and hurt those relationships. So renewal and repair is necessary and sacred work. So what’s one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of renewal? It tells us to “Get comfortable with the work of renewal and repair!”

Translating This for Young Children:

We renew and repair our relationships when we can say “I’m sorry” and really mean it. It feels so much better to recognize that we’ve made a mistake and will try to learn from it. It feels so much better to let the person you hurt know that you wish you hadn’t. Our Jewish friends even set aside a special holiday called Yom Kippur to say “I’m sorry” to everyone who’s feelings they hurt.

Introduce It

(Wonder Box*)

A Mistake with a Ball

In the Wonder Box: a ball

Suggested Script:

Do you know what this is? It’s a ball (or baseball, tennis ball, golf ball depending on the family sport.) It’s used to play baseball, which is a game. How many of you play baseball? What happens in baseball? You hit the ball with a bat and try to run around the bases. Is it hard to hit the ball? Yes. You miss it, or it flies off in a different direction. Sometimes when the ball flies off in a different direction, it hits something it’s not supposed to. Like breaking a window, crushing some flowers, or even hitting a car that was parked nearby. [The Jones’ had something like this happen, and they have agreed to share the mistake that was made and what happened afterwards.]

When we make mistakes, we need to find the strength to repair what went wrong. That means owning up to the damage. Saying you’re sorry. When we repair our mistakes, we are renewed, made happy again. It’s hard to do, but it is the right thing to do. When we do the right thing, we feel back in balance with the world. Our Jewish friends celebrate a holiday this month called “Yom Kippur” as a time to say, “I’m sorry.”

Lead With Strategy: Invite a family who plays baseball, soccer, golf, tennis or other sport involving a ball. Have they ever made a mistake with the ball they play with, like breaking a window, crushing a plant, or hitting a car? Invite them to tell about the mistake they made when playing and how they made up for it/fixed it.

Tell It

(Puppet Show)

Bear and Butterfly Puppet Show

Finger Puppets say, "I'm Sorry!"

Use two small finger puppets, different from each other, or 2 of anything, such as pipe cleaners, which can be made into pretend puppets.

Leader: What's in the Wonder Box. Two puppets. Hi little puppets. What's your name?

I'm butterfly! [or whoever.]

I'm bear! [or whoever.]

Leader: What are you doing today?

Butterfly: I'm flying around. Whee!

Bear: I want to fly around too, Whee, whee, whee. [Bear bumps Butterfly]

Butterfly: Ouch, Bear! Stop, you hit me!

Bear: [doesn't hear.] Whee, whee, whee!

Butterfly: Ouch, Bear. Stop. Stop. You hurt me!

Bear: Whee, whee, what?! I was having fun. I didn't see you.

Butterfly: But it hurts!

Bear: Oh, oh. No more fun. That's too bad.

Butterfly: I want to go home.

Bear: Wait. You really are hurt. I didn't know. I wasn't paying attention.

Butterfly: You didn't stop. I was scared.

Bear: I'm so sorry, Butterfly! I should have stopped and helped you.

Butterfly: That would have been better.

Bear: Oh my! That is not the way I want to treat my bestest friend. I'm really sorry.

Butterfly: Well, thank you, Bear. I appreciate your apology. I'm glad to be your bestest friend. Because you are my bestest friend back. I feel better now. Let's do something quiet now.

Leader: Bear and Butterfly, why don't you rest and play a quieter game. I'll visit with the children. (put the puppets away) Today, we are going to explore saying I'm sorry, just the way that Bear told Butterfly.

Meditate on It

(Mindfulness Practice)

Sorry in Sign Language Mindfulness

Centering: Begin with the Meditation Fingerplay to center the children. Invite the children to follow along:

“I wiggle my fingers, I wiggle my toes, I wiggle my shoulders, I wiggle my nose.

Now no more wiggles are left in me, so I’ll be as still as still can be.”

Now, with all the wiggles out of us, let’s get into our meditation positions.

Sit comfortably on the floor or at the table where the computer is.

Put your hands in your lap or on your knees.

Sit up nice and tall.

Focus your eyes.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Meditation Script: The Feeling of Sorry

When we make a mistake, it doesn’t feel good. We get a sick feeling in our stomach. We feel anxious. Our breathing even gets fast as if our bodies are preparing to run away. And this is what’s so great about saying we’re sorry. It’s scary to say “I’m sorry” but it also feels good doesn’t it? Once someone has accepted our sorry, we feel calm again. Saying the word “sorry” is like breathing out all the bad energy and breathing in soothing air. So, for our mindfulness moment today, I want to invite us to feel that good feeling we get when we say we’re sorry.

And we’re going to do that by first learning how to say sorry in sign language. [teach it: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siQnKSRRg_c]. Now try that yourself. It kind of feels good to rub your chest in a circle like that, doesn’t it? It feels soothing; just like when we say sorry.

So let’s keep doing the sign but now as you rub your hand in a circle on your chest, take a breath in through your nose and then slowly blow it through your mouth. Now let’s try doing that three times in a row. How do you feel? Calmer right? So, remember that next time you’re feeling bad after making a mistake. Remind yourself of how good it will feel once you stir up the courage to say sorry. It will help the person you are apologizing to, and help you too!

Lead With Strategy: Invite a person who knows ASL to teach the sign language.

Explore It

(small group activities and experiential learning)

Wash Away Your Mistakes

“Using washable markers, write or draw on a coffee filter all the things you would like to throw away from the past year. Then, float the filters in a bucket or small pool of water and watch your writing wash away. Use this opportunity to talk with your child about why we are serious on Yom Kippur: because we are thinking about things we did that weren’t so great, but we are happy because at the end of Yom Kippur, we get to start again.” <https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/yom-kippur/how-ready-your-young-child-yom-kippur>

Take It Home

(Home based activities)

This section provides ideas for your weekly follow-up emails to parents, giving them some ways to build on themes and activities you did in your online worship and groups.

Family Sharing Tips & Lesson Follow Up

- **Possible Script for Email:** “Hello Parents! As you know, during the meditation that was focused on how we are renewed by saying, “I’m sorry”, we learned the sign language for “Sorry” in the meditation. Invite the entire family to learn it. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siQnKSRRg_c and use it when you need to say I’m sorry.”

Lesson E:

Renewed by Loving Our Unique Selves (Inherent Worth)

Theme Angle:

Our faith reminds us that we renew ourselves by being true to ourselves. This is captured most directly in our celebration of the “worth and dignity of every person.” It’s also captured in the words of the Joseph Campbell quote so many UUs love to quote: “Follow your bliss.” So what’s one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of renewal? It tells us, “Love who you are!”

Translate This for Young Children:

We all feel renewed by remembering and celebrating what is unique about us.

Introduce It (Wonder Box*)

Fingerprints

In the Wonder Box: a fingerprint

Suggested Script:

Now it is time to open the Wonder Box. What’s in the Wonder Box, Liu family? It is a fingerprint!

Every person’s fingerprint is unique to them. That’s why it is used to unlock a Smart phone. [option, if family can demonstrate it]

Take a look at your own fingerprints. Can you see the tiny patterns?

“...Fingerprints are made of an arrangement of ridges, called **friction ridges**... You leave fingerprints on glasses, tables and just about anything else you touch...

All of the ridges of fingerprints form patterns called loops, whorls or arches:

- **Loops** begin on one side of the finger, curve around or upward, and exit the other side...
- **Whorls** form a circular or spiral pattern.
- **Arches** slope upward and then down, like very narrow mountains.” – from [How Stuff Works](#)

There are other ways that you are unique in addition to your fingerprint. You love certain things which are unique to you such as I love to canoe [or whatever]. Not everyone has to love canoeing. I feel back in balance after I go canoeing. It renews me. I wonder what special things you love to do to be happy. It doesn’t have to be like anyone else, just like a fingerprint. When you do these things you feel renewed and happy, too.

Lead With Strategy: Invite a family to make a fingerprint to share using a stamp pad or pencil graphite (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZiUpaiuN8o>) Also, they may be able to demonstrate how they unlock their Smartphone.

Tell It & Talk about It

(Story)

Louie by Ezra Jack Keats Video or Book

Video: <https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/read-aloud/louie/>

Book: https://www.amazon.com/Louie-Ezra-Jack-Keats/dp/0142400807/ref=sr_1_1?crid=25LQHJPUVBAC&dchild=1&keywords=louie+ezra+jack+keats&qid=1592237198&srefix=Louie+by+Ezra%2Caps%2C188&sr=8-1

Louie doesn't talk. We don't know what is wrong. But he emerges from his silence when he recognizes something that he would love to do – make friends with a puppet! He is renewed by his discovery. The children who offer him the puppet are also renewed by their generosity towards Louie.

Online Permission Note: Puffin Books (an imprint of Penguin Random House Publishers) has authorized its books for online use as long as you follow their specific use guidelines found [HERE](#). Just scroll down the section titled "Penguin Random House Publishers."

Meditate on It

(Mindfulness Practice)

Unique and Unrepeatable Song

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/lovesurrounds/session6/170030.shtml>

Centering: Begin with the Meditation Fingerplay to center the children. Invite the children to follow along:

"I wiggle my fingers, I wiggle my toes, I wiggle my shoulders, I wiggle my nose.
Now no more wiggles are left in me, so I'll be as still as still can be."

Now, with all the wiggles out of us, let's get into our meditation positions.

Sit comfortably on the floor or at the table where the computer is.

Put your hands in your lap or on your knees.

Sit up nice and tall.

Focus your eyes.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Meditation Script:

Take a deep breath in. In and Out. We are each special and unique. We each have something special and unique that we love to do, to make ourselves happy. We are going to sing a song about how each of us is unique and unrepeatable. Follow the instructions on the webpage above.

Sing it once through so children learn the song.

Sing it again with loud voices, then soft voices, then hum together to end in quiet and silence.

May you find joy in being unique and unrepeatable.

Explore It

(small group activities and experiential learning)

What Do YOU Love to Do Online Find 'N Show

Activity: Invite the children to find something to share with everyone that they love to do. Do they love to draw, bring their markers. Nap with a special lovey, show their stuffed animal. Kick a ball, find their favorite ball. Read a book, find their book and show it to the group.

Lead With Strategy: a person willing to share what they love to do as an introduction. (Join Jane as she tells us about her love of reading to her grandchildren.)

Take It Home

(Home based activities)

This section provides ideas for your weekly follow-up emails to parents, giving them some ways to build on themes and activities you did in your online worship and groups.

Family Sharing Tips & Lesson Follow Up

- **Possible Script for Email:** “Hello Parents! As you know, during small group time that was focused on how we are renewed by loving our unique selves, we played “Find ‘N Show” and shared the unique things we love to do. Play it with the family! Share each family member’s way to unwind and renew with each other. Is it taking a bike ride? Reading a book? You may love the same things as another person in your family, or something different. Now, go do it! Invite each family member to lead what they love to do and share the joy in being renewed.”
- Or Watch at Home: You are Special with Mr. Rogers
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhuYv5cEvHY>

Connecting with Other Families!

Family-to-Family Connection Events

Each month we suggest ideas for all-family or all-church events. While we can't connect in large groups in person during COVID, there are still creative ways to connect with other families online or by being careful and creative with some in-person events. We've identified five types of family-to-family activities that are Covid safe. Each month we will suggest one idea for each category and relate it to our monthly theme. Hopefully one or two of our suggestions will seem just right for you! These family events are important for families of young children, as these events are one of the best ways to help young children feel at home with their church community alongside their family.

Show 'N Tell Online Event

Option #1 - Share Your Connection to Dismantling White Supremacy. What items keep the call of racial justice in front of you? What books, posters, dolls, foods, etc. inspire your family to include diversity in daily living?

Theme Connection: As we renew our commitment to dismantle white supremacy this month, we re-commit to including diversity in the fabric of our lives at home.

Option #2 - Who has the Biggest Zucchini and Weirdest Carrot? Or other produce or plant? Houseplants count too!

It's just fun to see how our gardens and flower beds produce surprising creations and "creatures!"

Theme Connection: Working gardens and flower beds is one of the most renewing activities we do. So many of us consider it a spiritual practice to connect with the earth and help things grow. This is a fun way to celebrate this activity that means so much to so many of us.

Social Distancing Social

Drive-By Water Communion. Invite families to drive to a special place and bring their "Living Waters" from home or their own special place. Because of virus transmission issues, the waters will not go into a communal bowl, but rather back into the Water Cycle of Life. Families put the water back into the Water Cycle of Life by driving by and watering a tree, a bush, or adding it to a stream if you have a bridge over a body of water you can safely offer as a drivable event. Renew family community with an online chat afterwards about where their water might have come from and where it will go. Extra credit: Make a short video of all of the folks driving by, to share online at a later date.

Theme Connection: Connects with Water Communion ceremony

Healthy Souls Cooking Event

Cooking With What Mother Nature Gave us This Week! Invite a family to share online the how-to preparation of a specialty dish using their garden produce. What makes this fun during the fall is that different types of food are ready at different times, so every week one or two types of vegetables are the star of the show. And overflow our garden baskets! So this is a great way to help each other figure out what to do with all of the turnips and zucchini from this week!

Theme connection: For so many of us, cultivating our gardens is the primary way we renew our spirits. To celebrate that we are inviting this family to share their special recipe from their garden.

UUndercover Agents and your family's M.K.M (Monthly Kindness Mission)

Be a Weed Fairy Family. It's harvest season in many zones. Find out who needs help weeding and show up at 6 a.m. with a couple of other church families to socially distance weed the flower bed of a church member who has been going through a hard time or needs a bit of help. Or mow a lawn!

Theme connection: Acts of kindness renew the recipients and the givers!

Check out this [Google Doc](#) with more details about UUndercover Agents and M.K.M.!

Wider Community Service

School Supplies. Invite families to collect or fund school supplies for school children in need and share the backpacks or supplies they have gathered online with each other.

Theme Connection: The school year renews and going back to school, even if it has to be at home, is a lot more exciting when you have the supplies you need. Help others renew with excitement this year by providing them with the supplies they need.

Research your local organization, example [here](#) or Kids In Need Foundation

<https://www.kinf.org/about/our-mission/>

Opportunities for Support

Come play and think together!

Summer Online Zoom Labs

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

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

Password: 333

Brainstorming Labs

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

- Nov. theme of “Healing,” Wed. Aug. 5, 2020, 1 p.m. ET

RE Leader Labs - Katie’s Overview and Group Sharing!

Second Wednesday of each month at 1 pm Eastern. Katie’s overview of the packet for the next month’s theme.

Structured sharing of challenges, opportunities, and take-aways on ideas for the theme. These Labs will be recorded and posted on the YouTube Soul Matters Channel at

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCe2pmT_ATh-pbkjF2m7rfOA

- Wed. July 8, 2020, 1 p.m. ET for “Adapting to Online RE” Overview
- Wed. Aug. 12, 2020, 1p.m. ET for September’s theme of “Renewal”

Other Resources and Sources of Support

“On the Road Together” - Soul Matters Senior High Youth Packet

A monthly packet for High School Youth Groups! Here’s the link to the [Soul Matters Youth Packet](#) page on our website.

Sessions with resources for Check In, Spiritual Practice, Discussion Starters, Expressing Yourself with the Arts, Fun and Games, and Off-Road Excursions.

New! Chalice Home Family Ministry Home Life Guide

Each monthly Chalice Home packet will be designed to be sent to your families and will include a family worship and family activity that is built around adding a new item/symbolic object to your family's home "altar" or as we refer to it, "Chalice Home." These activities and objects will connect to our monthly themes and lift up a different source of spiritual nourishment. Here’s the link to the Chalice Home page on our website:

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

RE Leader Facebook Page

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

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

Inspiration Facebook Page

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

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

Soul Matters Music Playlists

We create two different playlists on the monthly theme each month: one in Spotify and another in YouTube. Music connects us to the themes in a way like nothing else.

Click [here](#) for links to the [Spotify playlists](#) for each month.

Click [here](#) to check out the [YouTube playlists](#).

Soulful Home Family Guides

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

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

There are three types of subscriptions: congregational, family and gift subscriptions. Check them all out!

If you don’t purchase a congregational subscription, consider sharing the link in your church newsletter or the weekly emails you send to parents.

Soul Matters RE Packet Author and Support Team:

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

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

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

Rev. Michelle Collins, Soul Matters Small Group & Special Projects Researcher

Rev. Scott Tayler, Soul Matters Team Lead

Credits:

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



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



Soul Matters

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

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Welcome to a New Year... of Online RE!

There's no getting around it. Online church is complicated. All of us are trying out new things and preparing to be flexible in the face of the unexpected challenges that will surely come our way. To support you in this new landscape of diverse and flexible programming, we've developed a new and fairly complex pedagogy to guide our work.

And yet at the same time, we've been working hard to keep our actual packets simple and user-friendly.

So, complex pedagogy and simple usage. That's our aim. That's our promise to you this year: We're going to tackle this new complicated world of online RE head on, all the while making sure we provide you with a simple structure to help you make your way.

Which means we can begin this year with enthusiasm and confidence! Yes, it's not going to be easy, but with a clear plan and by leaning on each other, it's also going to be an exciting year.

In that spirit of excitement, confidence and partnership, here's an overview of the pedagogy behind our packets and the work we plan to do for you and with you this year!

Our Pedagogy for Online RE

Our Approach in a Nutshell:

We provide...

multi-use building blocks
to support four relationally based environments/ministries
that encourage "lead-with" strategies,
build off each other,
and are tied together by a thematic & actionable through line.

Now let's tease that out piece by piece...

Multi-Use Building Blocks

Instead of four weeks' worth of class *curriculum*, our packets will now contain four sections of "building blocks" that you can use to create whatever kind of programming you offer: worship, small groups, mid-week story time, etc. Each section is designed around a particular "lesson" or angle on the monthly theme. The building blocks in each of these themed sections include:

- **"Introduce It"** - Object lessons and wonder box presentations to help leaders introduce the lesson/theme angle for the children
- **"Tell It & Talk About It"** - Stories (and some puppet scripts) to help bring the theme angle to life through storytelling
- **"Meditate on It"** - Various mindfulness practices to help children engage the theme angle in a more reflective and quiet way.
- **"Explore It"** - Small group activities and experiential learning designed for online experience. Just because we can't be together physically doesn't mean we can't play and create together online!
- **"Take It Home"** - Ideas about how to weave the theme angle into family and home life.

Four Relationally Based Environments/Ministries for Online RE

In this time of physical separation, we need to pay extra attention to the key relationships that nurture our children. So our packets support and encourage four distinct types of relationship and relationally-based environments:

1. **Leader to Child Relationship** – supported by worship programming and environments
2. **Child to Child Relationships** – supported by small group programming and environments
3. **Family Member to Family Member Relationships** – supported by home life programming
4. **Family to Family Relationships** – supported by special programming and events that bring church families together or mobilize them to engage their community

“Lead-With” Strategies

It’s difficult to create compelling online experiences. Too often leaders assume they can create those compelling moments on their own using their skill and charisma. It turns out that doesn’t always work. Remember Mr. Roger’s secret? He always pulled in guests when engaging his audience. In other words, he “led with” rather than led.

So throughout our packets we will sprinkle tips for how you can pull in children, families and other co-leaders as you present your online programming. After all, it’s fine to watch your DRE light the chalice, but if you know your DRE is inviting one of your buddy’s families to light the chalice or help tell the story, you’ll be a whole lot more excited about tuning in. If you lead online yoga for families, that’s cool, but if you recruit a family from your church to lead it alongside you, twice as many families will show up. And sure, you can do a neat science experiment to illustrate the monthly theme, but if you do it with Sandy’s mom who is a chemist, that’s definitely something kids - and parents - show up to watch!

Programming that Builds Off Each Other (i.e. “passing the baton”)

As you know, Soul Matters was founded on the idea of bringing coherence to church life through monthly themes. Themes allow us to tie the various aspects of church life together. To enhance this commitment to connected programming, we will include *programmatic* “throughlines” to complement our thematic throughlines. So the content and design of our RE packets supports what we call a “pass the baton” strategy. This allows what you do in worship to flow into your childrens’ small group. And what goes on in those small groups will set up and flow into your home life ministry. Which in turn will set the stage for the wider all-church activities you organize.

This is why our building blocks now include a “Take it Home” section. And why we’ve added a brand-new section called “Connecting with Other Families” which supplies you with plenty of ideas for special programming and events that bring church families together or mobilize them to engage their community.

Two Packets to Keep Things Simple

Structuring our packets around building blocks is not our only strategy to keep things simple and more user-friendly. This year we're also separating out our material for younger and older children into two separate packets!

Two Age Groupings

Each month you will receive two separate packets divided by age group and their separate needs for online faith formation:

1. Preschool – First Grades
2. Second – Fifth Grades

For youth, we distribute:

1. "[On the Road Together](#)," a senior high youth group packet filled with resources for online youth group, and
2. "[Crossing Paths](#)" a middle school curriculum that uses interfaith exploration to build UU Identity.

Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten/First Grade

We heard loud and clear that online Zoom groups aren't working well for this age group. So we're curating resources for this age group that are action and object based - like embodied meditations, arts activities and Wonder Box elements, as well as activities that employ treasure hunt and "find & show" strategies.

Second Through Fifth Grades

This age is more comfortable with online meetings than the younger children, but still needs short, active, experiential small group activities to build their relationships and keep their attention. They are already spending a lot of time online getting information handed to them, so making sure RE is experiential is extra important. With this in mind, we will be leaning on 4 strategies to ensure compelling online interactive experiences:

- Simultaneous creation (i.e. online simple creative projects one can do on the screen with others)
- Science experiment-based lessons
- Treasure hunt approaches
- "Find 'N Show" type approaches

And, of course, we've not given up on games! We will keep hunting for games that work well online. After all, spirituality without fun and silliness is, well, no fun at all! :)

Welcome to Renewal!

Welcome to the Soul Matters Packet for Second through Fifth Grades for the month of September!

This month we're exploring the many ways our UU faith invites us to become "A People of Renewal." Our sessions are centered around four special angles or lessons about how we are renewed and what we are called to renew ourselves to. Each lesson title reflects a message or guidance from our faith about being a person of renewal:

- Lesson A. Recommit to Community (Water Communion)
- Lesson B. Recommit to Dismantling Racism (Anti-Racism)
- Lesson C. Let Wonder Wash Over You (Our UU First Source)
- Lesson D. Repair and Renew Your Relationships (Yom Kippur)
- Lesson E. Love Who You Are (Our UU First Principle - Inherent Worth)

As the pandemic stretches on and wears us down, the theme of renewal becomes an extra important focus for us. For instance, when my husband and I found out that our favorite Utah river trip had just opened up, we grabbed the chance to be renewed, just the two of us and our canoe, floating down the labyrinths of Canyonlands National Park on the Green River. We were socially distanced, no people for miles, for 5 days, camping along the riverbank. We cooled ourselves from the heat of the desert by dipping our hats and shirts in the river. We viewed the night stars. What an antidote to the worry and uncertainty of the pandemic! This was truly a time when wonder washed over us. I hope our session/lesson on wonder helps you and your families experience the same!

Focused Lessons on Anti-Racism: This summer has renewed the urgency of addressing the trauma and harm of racism. With this in mind, we're adding an additional anti-racist strategy to our packets. We've already been including diverse voices and decentering aspects to all our lessons, but this year we're going to dedicate an *entire lesson* each month to a different aspect of dismantling white supremacy. This month, that dedicated lesson focuses on reviewing the basics and renewing some of the skills needed to do the work.

Additional Lessons to Help with Summer Programming: We've included 5 lessons even though there are only 4 Sundays in September. We hope that this gives you additional lessons to use in your August programming. And remember, we also suggest checking out our [individual packets](#) on past themes to cover summer Sundays as well.

New "Lead-With" Suggestions: Besides the content in the packet, I'm also excited about the strategies we are using. For instance, I'm especially loving the "Lead With" strategies we are recommending. To make the online experience even more compelling, we have sprinkled tips for how to pull in children, families and other co-leaders as you present your online programming. For example, sharing how the Obaya family unlocks their smartphone with their fingerprint, or inviting a family to share a mishap with a ball. Just as Mr. Rogers made his programming more attractive by welcoming guests to present topics with him, we too can spice up our programming with strategically chosen co-leaders.

Online Doesn't Have to Be Boring: I'm also excited about the intentional lightheartedness and interactive activities we are bringing to the Children's Small Group experiences. It's not easy to ensure experiential learning online, but with well-researched games and interactive strategies, we hope to invite the children into a relaxed time when they can play and create with each other, thereby continuing to deepen their relationships with each other even though they can't be together in person. As we religious educators know, fun -and even silly - interaction is the glue that helps learning and relationships stick!

Looking to the Year with Confidence and a Sense of Adventure: Finally, September has always felt like New Year's to me. We come to church renewed after the warm months of summer, ready to renew friendships, activities and another year together. I can't help but think of these packets as a renewal of confidence and joy. We all have struggled to understand how to offer online faith formation during this time of pandemic. With the new approaches we've come up with - you and us together - we can now look forward to this new year with a sense of adventure and confidence, rather than worry and anxiety. We are thrilled to share this renewal of hope and possibility with you. Let the new year begin!

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

DRE for Soul Matters

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Calendar Connections

September 2020 - Renewal

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

Interfaith:

- [Rosh Hashanah](#) - Jewish New Year - Sept. 18 - 19, 2020
- [Mabon/Autumn Equinox](#) - Wicca - Sept. 22, 2020 (more [here](#) & [here](#))
- [Yom Kippur](#) - Jewish Day of Atonement - Sept. 27, 2020, begins evening of the 26th
- [Rumi's birthday](#) - Sept. 30 (1207)
- [Al-Hijra/Muharram](#) - Islamic New Year (day and month) - begins Aug. 19, 2020

Unitarian Universalist:

- Ingathering/Water Communion Ritual - Early Sept. - date varies by congregation
- The first meeting of [the Transcendentalist Club](#) - Sept. 19 (1836) (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- Universalism Day: [John Murray](#) preaches [1st sermon](#) in US (1770) - Sept. 30 (more [here](#))

National & Cultural:

- [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) (Sept. 15 - Oct. 15)
- [Suicide Prevention Month](#), World Suicide Prevention Day is Sept. 10
- [Labor Day](#) – Sept. 7 (*first Monday)
- [International Literacy Day](#) - Sept. 08
- [Grandparents Day](#) - Sept. 10
- [9-11 Remembrance](#) - Sept. 11
- [International Peace Day](#) Sept. 21 (more [here](#))
- [World Gratitude Day](#) - Sept. 21
- [Bisexual Pride Day](#), CBD, Bisexual Pride, and Bi Visibility Day - Sept. 23
- [Bisexual Awareness Week](#) - Week of September 23 ([here](#))
- Publication of [David Walker's Appeal](#) - Sept 28 (1829) (more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe:

- [Johnny Appleseed Day](#) - Sept. 26
- [Talk Like a Pirate Day](#) - Sept. 19
- [Hobbit Day](#) - Sept. 22
- [Banned Books Week](#) - Sept. 23-29 (more [here](#))

Lesson A:

Recommit to Community

(Water Communion Focus)

Theme Angle:

Our faith asks us to continually renew and recommit ourselves to our church community. It also reminds us that religious community is a primary source of renewal for human beings. So what's one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of renewal? It tells us to "Recommit yourself to your church community and let your church community nourish your spirit!"

Introduce It

(Object Lesson)

A Really UU Service: Water Communion Reflection

Reflection Object: Running water

Options:

- A physical fountain with running water ([here](#)) and ([here](#).)
- Two glasses with you slowly pouring water from one glass into the other.

Suggested Script:

Invite focus on the sound of running water, lifting up how it is a universally soothing sound and represents those parts of life that calm us, "fill us up" and quench our thirst. [Invite a family with a fountain or stream to show their running water and share how it calms them] This symbolism is the reason we UUs use water as the centerpiece of the ritual that begins every new church year.

Many of the holidays we honor and lift up come from other religions and traditions – Christmas, Easter, Halloween. One of the ones that was created by Unitarian Universalists and is one of our very own is the Water Communion or Water Service. The original service was created by a group of women in 1980. Here are some of their words describing why they used water as the central symbol (share the readings with your co-leaders, if desired):

“Celebrating now our connectedness, we choose water as our symbol of our empowerment. As rivers in cycle release their waters and regain new beginnings, so do we cycle. For us as women these beginnings are powerful, but not easy. But still we come to create and to celebrate and to live by the only spirituality worthy of our devotion—a spirituality that uplifts, empowers and connects.” – original words from the Original Water Service

<https://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/featured-new/water-rituals-and-ingatherings-revitalized/>

“The core symbolism of the Water Communion is that we all come from water: as a species on a planet where life began in the ocean, as mammals who float in amniotic fluid as we are readied for birth, as beings whose cells are mostly water. And yet we are separate from each other, and we have been apart—since there tends to be a slowing-down, a different rhythm in the summer months, even in churches that have services and religious education right on through the summer—and now we are reuniting. We are separate and together, the way water scatters into rain and streams and clouds and springs and ponds and puddles and yet flows together again and again, one great planetary ocean. Not only is no drop of water superior to any other; all water comes from the same place.”

From the blog post by Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern

<https://sermonsinstones.com/2013/06/13/lifting-water-communion-above-privilege-and-trivia/>

And so once a year, UU congregations from all over the country invite their members to bring in water from a place or activity that renewed them over the summer. It could be from the kitchen tap, garden hose, favorite swimming pool or from a trip one took over the summer. We combine these waters as an act of renewing our commitment to our church community and as a reminder that truly nourishing water is one that welcomes the “many unique streams” of everyone.

Connecting this wonder box/object lesson to your water communion ceremony:

We know you are all doing water communion in different ways....so we offer a few suggestions.

- For instance, you may be offering it as a Drive Through Water Communion (as suggested in the Connecting with Other Families Section of this packet.) You could then emphasize the Water Cycle of Life and how the water poured into the ground or stream becomes part of all of the water on our planet.
- If you are offering it online and virtually, you may wish to turn on your tap water to illustrate how simple it is to collect water, since it is all coming from the same fixed source of water on our planet.
- If you are simply sharing memories about past Water Communions, you could invite a family to share their memories of what they did in previous Water Communions.

Lead With Strategy:

Invite a family who has a fountain or a nearby stream. Or invite someone who can share past Water Communion services that they remember.

Transition Tool: Use between the readings or sections.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkLRith2wcc>.

A video of water noise

Tell It and Talk About It (Story)

Higgins: A Drop with a Dream

By Christopher Buice

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/higgins>

Engaging the Children: Afterward invite the children to share their own take away from the story. What do you think the lesson of the story is?

Remember props make the story all the more exciting. Having a bucket and a water dropper are two easy options.

Lead with Strategy: Invite a social justice leader in your congregation to join you on the zoom call. Explain to the kids that you've invited this person here because they've had a special experience, you'd like them to hear about. Then have the person tell a very brief personal story of feeling inadequate to make a difference, but then were surprisingly joined by others and learned that lesson that together we can make a big difference. Afterward, explain that this is what today's story is all about. Invite them to read/tell the story.

Online Permission Note: Worship web material has been authorized for online use. See "[Permission Source](#)."

Meditate on It (Mindfulness Practice)

Water Meditation

Option #1: We Are Water

Prep: Gather a larger clear glass and then another glass of the same size that is filled with water.

Suggested Script:

For our moment of mindfulness, I want to invite us to think about our own personal connection with water. See this glass. I want you to imagine that it is your body. How much of your body do you think is made up of water? Let's take some guesses.

[fill the glass 1/4 up]

So here's about 25% full. How many of you think our bodies are made up of 25% water?

[fill the glass 1/2 up]

So here's about 50% full. How many of you think our bodies are made up of 50% water?

[fill the glass 3/4 up]

So here's about 70% full. How many of you think our bodies are made up of 70% water?

Right! [Scientists say](#) we are made up of about 70% water! That's amazing right? I would have never guessed it would be that much. Water molecules can be found in every part of our body. It is what keeps every part of us healthy and functioning well.

But here's what I like to think about the most: So many other things are also full of water - not just oceans and rivers, but animals, plants and other people. Which means that *water connects us all!* It's something we all share. It makes me feel connected to everything.

So let's all take a moment of stillness to be more mindful about that.

Centering: I invite you to move into our meditation position.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Sit up nice and tall.

Focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Now focus on the glass of water and imagine all the water floating around inside you.

As you do so, take in another breath through your nose and let it out slowly through your mouth.

Now as you keep focusing on the water, imagine a body of water you love, like a river or the ocean.

As you do so, take in another breath through your nose and let it out slowly through your mouth.

And finally imagine looking out at everything as being able to see it in everything, the plants, in people, in animals, in nature as a stream or falling from the sky as rain.

Now in a very quiet whisper, repeat after me: "I'm so thankful for the water that keeps us alive and healthy." [repeat] "I'm so thankful for being connected to all living things." [repeat]

Now can you take one last breath? In through your nose; out through your mouth.

Thanks so much you wonderful water containers! :)

Option #2: Waterfall Visualization

Invite the group to find a relaxing position, close their eyes and take some deep breaths. Then offer the following meditation and visualization:

"A beautiful waterfall of white light is flowing down on you. It flows down on your head, helping your head to relax. You feel your head relaxing. It moves down over your neck and shoulders. Your neck and shoulders are relaxing. Now it flows down over your arms. You feel your arms relaxing. It flows down your back. Your back is letting go and relaxing. It flows over your chest and stomach, helping your chest and stomach relax. You feel your chest and stomach relax. It moves down over your legs and feet. You feel your legs and feet letting go and relaxing. The beautiful waterfall of white light is flowing over your whole body. You are very peaceful and relaxed." From <https://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/meditate/water.htm>

Lead With Strategy - Who is known as a spiritual person, who has that voice you love to hear? Invite them to offer meditation!

Explore It

(online small group activities and experiential learning)

Online Rainstorm

From UUA's Deep Fun <https://www.uua.org/youth/library/deepfun/bond-building>

Talking Points and Takeaways:

- Introduce the activity by highlighting how water communion teaches us we are all connected, like many streams that flow into one river.
- To play with these ideas, we're going to try to *feel* connected through pretending to be water. But not just *any* water: a storm!
- Remember: We are all connected, like many streams that flow into one river.

Activity:

Explain that this is a follow the leader activity, with you starting a motion that they will then imitate. Invite everyone to turn up the volume on their computers before they begin.

The order of the motions is:

1. rubbing hands together
2. rubbing hands on thighs
3. snapping fingers
4. clapping hands
5. stomping feet and clapping hands

Once you reach #5, repeat the motions in descending order. The last motion to be passed around is stillness and silence.

Chat about It Prompts/Questions:

- What was your favorite step? The snapping? Clapping? Stomping? And why?
- When was the last time you stomped in a puddle or ran through a sprinkler?
- Do storms scare you? Or do you enjoy them?
- What other kinds of activities make you feel connected to people? Singing in a choir? Playing on a sports team? Chanting at a social justice rally?

Lead With Strategy: Find a youth who has done this at a con!

Take It Home

(Home based activity)

This section provides ideas for your weekly follow-up emails to parents, giving them some ways to build on themes and activities you did in your online worship and groups.

Family Sharing Tips & Lesson Follow Up

- **Possible Script for Email:** “Hello Parents! As you know, during the Meditation that was focused on how we are recommit to community through the Water Communion, we learned how much of our bodies are water. Ask your child(ren) if they remember the percent. Enjoy together the [Star Trek episode](#) when a silicon based life form calls us “Ugly sacs of mostly water.” (note: they say we are 90% water in the episode, but [scientists say](#) we are about 70%.)”
- Or **share stories about the bodies of water** that are special to your family, and what makes them special.
- Or **Build Your Own Water Fountain**

As a way of continuing to lift up church community as a source of “nourishing water,” invite your families to build their own water fountain.

Purchase a [small submersible fountain](#), place in a bowl, then decorate with small plants and rocks for a table. Here’s a video on how to build an easy water fountain outdoors: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKyEHC6vmXA>

Make it a “UU Fountain” by using a marker to draw some chalices on the rocks in your fountain.

Lesson B:

Recommit to Dismantling Racism (Anti-Racism)

Theme Angle:

Our faith reminds us that we must renew our vigor in the fight against racism. In light of the current events which have catalyzed the world, we renew the energy with which we teach our children about racism. So what's one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of renewal? It tells us, "Renew your commitment to dismantling racism!"

Introduce It (Wonder Box/Object Lesson)

Green Crayons

In the Wonder Box: a green crayon/ marker and a box, or if you can manage it, a whole box of green crayons/markers. On the side: a box of multicultural [crayons](#) or [markers](#).

Suggested Script:

What's in the Wonder Box today? Here's a box of crayons (or markers). I love crayons because it means I can draw a picture! Oops, there's only a green crayon! What would it be like if I could only color with one crayon? [demonstrate it or invite your co-leader]

We love having lots of different colors to draw with. [Draw with all the different colors.]

Here's a special box with lots of different colors of crayons called "multicultural." That's because there are lots of different colors of skin. [Invite your co-leader to draw various people with different skin tones.]

We love the different colors of skin tones the same way we love all the different colors of crayons. And notice how wonderfully different each is. [lift up a few of the colors and point out what makes them marvelously unique] Our faith wants us to notice this about people too: how our differences are wonderful, and each difference is wonderfully unique.

Some people are treated badly because of the color of their skin. That is called racism. We are working hard to make racism go away. No one should be treated badly because of the color of their skin. We are different and that makes life beautiful.

Lead With Strategy:

Invite a person who can sketch - different faces or people of different colors.

Tell It and Talk About It (Story)

A Kid’s Book About Racism (Video Story Book)

A Kids Book About Racism by Jelani Memory

Video by the author: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnaltG5N8nE>

Book: <https://akidsbookabout.com/products/a-kids-book-about-racism> (50% off for non-profits)

Theme Connection: While the story has no pictures, the text and the hands of the author make a good telling in this video, outlining the basics of what racism is.

Lead With Strategy: Someone who has worked hard to end racism, to share the introduction of the book and what racism means to them.

Online Permission Note: “A Kids Book About” publishing has not publicly shared direction about online use, so you will need to make your own judgement call about use of this story. For help thinking through that see our Soul Matters document: [Copyright Guidance for Online Story Reading](#).

Separate is Never Equal by Duncan Tonatiuh

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAg34W4bfxQ> (16 min)

Book: [Here](#)

Theme Connection: The story of how the Mendez family of Orange County, CA overcame school segregation. Over and over, Sophia’s father was renewed in his fight for justice.

Lead With Strategy: A person from southern California, or a relative who lives in southern California who could join the online meeting.

Online Permission Note: Abrams Publishing has authorized its books for online use as long as you follow their specific use guidelines found [HERE](#). Just scroll down the section titled “Abrams Children’s Books Temporary Permission.”

Meditate on It

(Meditation)

Shark Fin Calming

Renewing our commitment to anti-racism means some anxious and tense times. It's inevitable given the heartbreak and difficulty we face when we do this hard work. This mindfulness exercise teaches children how to calm themselves whenever they are anxious and need to pause during hard conversations or to discuss hard things. So you can present this as practice or a tool for those times... Find it at [Classroom Mindfulness Activities, #4](#).

Centering:

I invite you to move into our meditation position.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Sit up nice and tall.

Focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Meditation Suggested Script:

Shark Fin excerpt:

"...Place the side of your hand on your forehead, with your palm facing out to the side.

Close your eyes.

Slide your hand down your face, in front of your nose.

Say "shhh" as you slide your hand down your face..."

(see [Classroom Mindfulness Activities, #4](#) for details)

Lead With Strategy: Is there a meditation teacher in your congregation? Or even a person with a calm voice who could join you? :)

Explore It

(small group activities and experiential learning)

Who Am I? Race Awareness Game for iPhone and iPad (free)

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/who-am-i-race-awareness-game/id372945923>

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

Workaround: Since not everyone has an iPad, share one iPad to the screen to play with everyone together.

Talking Points and Takeaways:

- a two-player game meant for a parent and child but we suggest adapting it for an online small group. The Chooser shows the iPad screen so the players see a set of faces. The Chooser selects a face. The other players, the Lookers, try to guess which face the first player chose. Players can test out their detective skills by asking questions about the physical appearance of the target

face (i.e. gender, age, race, etc.) to eliminate the other choices. The Lookers discuss among themselves and try to reach consensus about which face was chosen. The Chooser can read more about the selected person. There are conversation tips between rounds.

- The important part of this game is to “act as a catalyst for meaningful discussions between parents and children about race, ethnicity, and culture. It contains photographs and personal quotes from a wide selection of real people.” - Common Sense Media review

Activity:

Play the Who Am I? Race Awareness Game

Chat about It Prompts/Questions:

There are conversation starters that are included when you pick a photograph.

Lead With Strategy: Invite families with an iPad to share “Chooser” roles by sharing their iPad screen online while the children try to guess the person indicated.

Take It Home (Home based activities)

This section provides ideas for your weekly follow-up emails to parents, giving them some ways to build on themes and activities you did in your online worship and groups.

Family Sharing Tips & Lesson Follow Up

- **Possible Script for Email:** “Hello Parents! As you know, during the Small Group time that was focused on how we are recommit to anti-racism work, we played the Who Am I? Race Awareness Game. It is originally a two-player game meant for a parent and child. We suggest you play it together as a family. Both players see a set of faces. The first player selects a face and passes the device to the other player who then tries to guess which face the first player chose. Players can test out their detective skills by asking questions about the physical appearance of the target face (i.e. gender, age, race, etc.) to eliminate the other choices. When the second player guesses, players can read more about the selected person. Parents get conversation tips between rounds. Note: Unfortunately, this app is available only for iPhone and iPad at this time.

Who Am I? Race Awareness Game for iPhone and iPad (free)

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/who-am-i-race-awareness-game/id372945923>

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

- **Or Watch Nick News Presents: Kids, Race, and Unity | Hosted By Alicia Keys**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWsMEIODO6g&feature=youtu.be>
Hosted by Alicia Keys, Nick News talks with founders and leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement, offer tools for families to have constructive conversations about race, and highlights teen activists who are fighting racial injustice in Kids, Race and Unity: A Nick News Special. Oriented to older elementary and tweens.

Lesson C:

Let Wonder Wash Over You

(Honoring Our First UU Source)

Theme Angle:

Our faith reminds us that wonder is a central source of renewal, so much so that we've put it in the first of our UU sources: "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life." So what's one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of renewal? It tells us to "Let wonder wash over you!"

Introduce It

(Object Lesson)

Wish Upon a Star Reflection

Reflection Object: Telescope and/or Picture of the "Eye of God" Nebula on NASA

Learn more about the Eye of God Nebula at:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOL9-nYUG_s
- <https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap030510.html>
- <https://io9.gizmodo.com/the-famous-eye-of-god-nebula-may-actually-be-weeping-1592005991> (This explains how the nebula may actually produce water that "seeds the cosmos.")

Suggested Script:

This photo by the Hubble Telescope is called the Eye of God. It is also called the Helix Nebula. It is about 650 light years away near the constellation Aquarius. This is one example of the parts of the universe which fill us with wonder.

When we look up at night, we see the stars in the sky. They make us wonder about our big questions. Wonder is a part of our Unitarian Universalist religion. It is one of our six Unitarian Universalist sources, in fact, it's number one. I'm going to read the words. Listen for the word "wonder" "renewal" and "life" when I read and hold up your finger if you can hear them. Here are the words (read slowly): "Direct experience of that transcending mystery and **wonder**, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a **renewal** of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold **life**." Lots of words. Did you hear the word "wonder" when I read the first source? "Renewal?" Did you hear the word "life"? How would you say this in your own words? [share their comments]

All of us wonder about things. When we wonder we renew our sense of the world as a place full of surprises and that makes us feel grateful and lucky to be alive, just as our first UU source suggests. Stars make us wonder. Looking at stars puts things in perspective.

Did you know there is a special wish you can make "on a star?" When you see the first star of the night, you can make a wish! That is one way our wonder can renew us.

Follow up by asking the children to share how gazing up at the stars makes them feel.

Lead With Strategy: Recruit a parent who is an amateur astronomer (someone who just likes to look at the stars) to join your zoom call. Ask them to bring their telescope. In this case you can ignore the Eye of God picture and just focus the kids on the telescope. Introduce your guest and tell the children that you invited them here so they could tell them about how they fell in love with star gazing. Ask the guest to end their sharing with a word or two about how stargazing renews their spirit.

Tell It and Talk About It (Story)

Option #1 You Are Stardust Video

Book: You are Stardust By Elin Kelsey

Video of the Book: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRzxDXQ5R8w>

(Some cool background that might be helpful:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/videos/category/smithsonian-channel/were-all-made-of-stardust-heres-how-1/>)

Online Permission Note: “OWLKids Publishing” has not publicly shared direction about online use, so you will need to make your own judgement call about use of this story. For help thinking through that see our Soul Matters document: [Copyright Guidance for Online Story Reading](#).

Option #2 Why We are Stardust Video for older elementary children

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WnJq_5QjBg

Meditate on It (Mindfulness Practice)

Feel Your Connection to The Stars

Use the below meditation as inspiration to create your own mindfulness experience about “feeling” your connection to the stars. Play off the idea that we are made of stardust and invite the kids to not just think about that but feel it by guiding them through a mindfulness exercise centered on rubbing their hands together, similar to how the below video meditation does it. Frame the hand rubbing with your own unique introduction and closing thought.

Centering:

I invite you to move into our meditation position.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Sit up nice and tall.

Focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Meditation Guidance:

Star Energy | Mindfulness with Bari Koral - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JjGi2sL1EY>

Explore It

(small group activities and experiential learning)

Send a Message in a Star!

Talking Points and Takeaways:

- Sometimes we wonder at “big things,” like the Grand Canyon. But often what’s most amazing in life is how much people go out of their way to support us or be kind. Acts of care, friendship and love are some of the most important and amazing things we experience. There’s a reason we say “You’re wonderful” when someone does something nice for us.
- So as a way of saying thanks, use this activity to say thanks to these special people. Think of it as a way of saying “you light up my life.”
- Or sometimes we forget that we are wonders. In that case, you can use this activity to write reminders to yourself about how much of a wonder you are.

Star Origami with a Message

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JugN18GDWFM>

Transition Tool: Play while the children are folding.

Waves of Light <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FiNZvuOkzY> (4 min.)

Chat about It Prompts/Questions:

- Who in your life makes you feel wonderful?
- Who introduced you to an amazing thing?

Some other origami stars for the more adventurous!

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1c7FIQt5UE>
- <https://www.instructables.com/id/Dollar-Bill-Origami-5-Or-6-Point-Money-Star/>

Lead With Strategy: Who is the older child who likes to fold origami? Invite them to learn this and then teach it!

Take It Home

(Home Based Activities)

This section provides ideas for your weekly follow-up emails to parents, giving them some ways to build on themes and activities you did in your online worship and groups.

Family Sharing Tips & Lesson Follow Up

- **Possible Script for Email:** “Hello Parents! During the Small Group time that was focused on how we are renewed by wonder, we learned how to make simple star origami, with messages inside. Ask your child to demonstrate it, or view the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JugN18GDWFM>
- Or “we talked about who in your child’s life makes them feel wonderful. Share your own people who make you feel wonderful during a family moment together.”
- Or schedule a Night of Family Stargazing
Experience some wonder as a family by using dinner time to talk about and learn about some star constellations. Then head outside when the sun goes down and find those constellations in the sky. Consider using one of the cool stargazing apps out there to assist you!

A Guide to Family Stargazing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtvDpuoR1j4>

15 Best Stargazing Apps

<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/g26089673/best-stargazing-apps/>

- Or Make a Star Jar!
Bring some wonder of the sky inside your house by doing one of these awesome family crafts:
DIY Nebula Jar
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrhWSdamtbI&list=PLd54oA1MBWfSxzCmHRSjOhRgEo2RlpCD4>
DIY Night Light STAR JAR
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlCmkrRRL4Y>

Lesson D:

Repair & Renew Your Relationships!

(Yom Kippur Focus)

Theme Angle:

As a covenantal religion, our faith places relationships and our promises to each other at the center of our faith. As since we're human we sometimes break those promises and hurt those relationships. So renewal and repair is necessary and sacred work. So what's one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of renewal? It tells us to "Get comfortable with the work of renewal and repair!"

Introduce It (Object Lesson)

A Mistake with a Ball

Reflection Object: A baseball (or some other kind of ball)

Sample Script: Here's a ball (or baseball, tennis ball, golf ball depending on the family sport.) It's used to play baseball, which is a game. How many of you play baseball? What happens in baseball? You hit the ball with a bat and try to run around the bases. Is it hard to hit the ball? Yes. You miss it, or it flies off in a different direction. Sometimes when the ball flies off in a different direction, it hits something it's not supposed to. Like breaking a window, crushing some flowers, or even hitting a car that was parked nearby.

When we make mistakes, we need to find the strength to repair what went wrong and renew our commitment to do better next time. That means owning up to the damage. Saying you're sorry. And here's the great thing: when we repair our mistakes, we are renewed too! We feel better and we are given the chance of a fresh start.

Lead With Strategy: Invite a family who plays baseball, soccer, golf, tennis or other sport involving a ball. Have they ever made a mistake with the ball they play with, like breaking a window, crushing a plant, or hitting a car? Invite them to tell about the mistake they made and how they made it up.

Tell It and Talk About It (Story)

The Hardest Word: A Yom Kippur Story Video

By Jacqueline Jules, Illustrated by Katherine Janus Kahn

Video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=17&v=Rmuiw70rkBA&feature=emb_logo

Book: [HERE](#)

Suggested Script: Example of telling the story in your own words:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rwg3cKn7FI>

(Note: the story is on the longer side so you might want to abbreviate it.)

Lead With Strategy: Find a parent who was raised Jewish or a parent/family in your congregation that still observes Jewish practice. Introduce them and have them share a short story about observing Yom Kippur and what it taught them about forgiveness. Explain that their story has a lot to do with the storybook you want to share today and invite your special guest and/or their children to introduce it

Transition Tool: video to play between segments

Idan Raichel ve Din Din Aviv - Im telech (If You Go)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=20&v=JCjSqndKhTo&feature=emb_logo

Online Permission Note: “Kar-Ben Publishing” has not publicly shared direction about online use, so you will need to make your own judgement call about use of this story. For help thinking through that see our Soul Matters document: [Copyright Guidance for Online Story Reading](#).

Meditate on It (Mindfulness Practice)

The Feeling of Sorry

Centering:

I invite you to move into our meditation position.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Sit up nice and tall.

Focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Meditation Suggested Script:

When we make a mistake, it doesn't feel good. We get a sick feeling in our stomach. We feel anxious. Our breathing even gets fast as if our bodies are preparing to run away. And this is what's so great about saying we're sorry. It's scary to say "I'm sorry" but it also feels good doesn't it? Once someone has accepted our sorry, we feel calm again. Saying the word "sorry" is like breathing out all the bad energy and breathing in soothing air. So for our mindfulness moment today, I want to invite us to feel that good feeling we get when we say we're sorry.

And we're going to do that by first learning how to say sorry in sign language. [teach it: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siQnKSRRg_c]. Now try that yourself. It kind of feels good to rub your chest in a circle like that, doesn't it? It feels soothing; just like when we say sorry.

So let's keep doing the sign but now as you rub your hand in a circle on your chest, take a breath in through your nose and then slowly blow it through your mouth. Now let's try doing that three times in a row. How do you feel? Calmer right? So remember that next time you're feeling bad after making a mistake. Remind yourself of how good it will feel once you stir up the courage to say sorry. It will help the person you are apologizing to, and help you too!

Lead With Strategy: Invite a person who knows ASL to teach the sign language.

Explore It

(small group activities and experiential learning)

Online Never Have I Ever Game

Talking Points and Takeaways:

- Introduce the activity by highlighting how everyone does things they might be sorry for afterward, it's part of being human.
- One important part of making mistakes and asking for forgiveness is the renewal that comes from acknowledging you're sorry and the learning that comes from trying to do better.

Activity:

Ever done something you were sorry for later? Play this version of "Never Have I Ever" online using these questions as prompts and/or making up your own. This works really well if you happen to use it as a follow up to the Ziz story above. This game highlights how everyone tries things that they might be sorry for afterwards, it's part of being human. It might be simple as realizing you have spun around so much you are going to throw up, or as tender as realizing you've hurt your sister's feelings by pranking her. The important part of making mistakes and asking for forgiveness is the renewal that comes from acknowledging you're sorry and the learning that comes from trying to do better.

Create a list of "Never Have I Ever" statements. You can use the lists below, or have participants write down statements and put them in a bowl.

Each participant makes two signs, one saying, "I Have" and one saying, "I Never".

The leader or assigned person reads a statement and everyone holds up a sign saying whether they have or have never done the action. No points need to be awarded, but it's still a fun way

to learn more about each other if you stop and share your experience. Or if you want to award points, each person gets 5 points for holding up the sign "I have." The person with the most points wins the distinction of having to tell the group something they were really sorry that they tried or did.

The Statements

Things for which you might be sorry....

Never have I ever accidentally knocked over a flower bush or even a tree, like the Ziz.
Never have I ever accidentally squashed something in a garden, like the Ziz.
Never have I ever ignored my parent's rules about when to go to sleep.
Never have I ever found it hard to say, "I'm sorry."
Never have I ever locked somebody in a room.
Never have I ever stuck my finger in birthday cake icing before it was cut.
Never have I ever lied about doing my chores.
Never have I ever put stuff under my bed or in my closet and pretended I cleaned my room.
Never have I ever fought with my brother or sister.
Never have I ever played a prank on my brother or sister while they were sleeping.
Never have I ever watched something on TV that I knew I wasn't allowed to.
Never have I ever fed the dog under the table.
Never have I ever drank milk from the jug.
Never have I ever gotten my brother or sister in trouble.
Never have I ever taken money out of Mom's purse.
Never have I ever asked Dad something after Mom already said "no."
Never have I ever found Christmas presents before Christmas.
Never have I ever eavesdropped on my parent's arguments.
Never have I ever gone to bed without brushing my teeth.
Never have I ever broken my parents' rules intentionally to see what happens.
Never have I ever been sent to the principal's office.

Now just do it for the fun of it to end the small group.

And to get to know each other better:

Never have I ever broken my arm.
Never have I ever written and mailed Santa a letter.
Never have I ever played video games for more than 4 hours in a day.
Never have I ever had an imaginary friend.
Never have I ever stayed awake all night after watching something scary.
Never have I ever had an argument with myself... and lost.
Never have I ever thought of escape plans from an alien, ninja or zombie invasion.
Never have I ever watched a Star Wars marathon.
Never have I ever eaten a large pizza by myself.
Never have I ever jumped into a trash can or dumpster.
Never have I ever eaten the insides of Oreos and put them back in the container.
Never have I ever tried to strategically time farts with loud noises.
Never have I ever tried cutting my own hair.
Never have I ever pretended to have my own cooking show.
Never have I ever accidentally put clothes on backwards and not noticed.
Never have I ever made up a fake language with my friends.
Never have I ever spun around so much that I threw up.
Never have I ever been embarrassed by my parents.

Never have I ever hid something under my mattress.
Never have I ever didn't like something my mom cooked.
Never have I ever paid my brother or sister to do my chores for me.
Never have I ever locked myself out of the house by accident.
Never have I ever believed cooties existed.
Never have I ever fallen asleep in class.
Never have I ever fallen off playground equipment.
Never have I ever fallen asleep on the school bus.
Never have I ever swapped lunches with someone else.

- Statements adapted from and inspired by <https://wehavekids.com/parenting/Clean-Never-Have-I-Ever-Questions-for-Kids>

Chat about It Prompts/Questions:

- Invite those with the highest points, or very compelling story to share why they were sorry.
- Offer the second list just for fun and to get to know each other better.

Lead With Strategy: Who likes to lead games? Or would a minister lead this with you to help clarify that making mistakes is part of life?

Take It Home

(Home based activities)

This section provides ideas for your weekly follow-up emails to parents, giving them some ways to build on themes and activities you did in your online worship and groups.

Family Sharing Tips & Lesson Follow Up

- **Possible Script for Email:** “Hello Parents! During the Meditation time that was focused on how we are renewed by saying, “I’m sorry,” we learned how to say “Sorry” in Sign Language. Ask your child to demonstrate what the sign is, or view the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siQnKSRRg_c
- Or “We talked about making mistakes, share your own stories of mistakes at the dinner table.”
- Or watch the story: The Hula Hoopin’ Queen
<https://www.storylineonline.net/books/hula-hoopin-queen/>
Read by: Oprah Winfrey, Written by: Thelma Godin, Illustrated by: Vanessa Brantley-Newton
“...Kameeka’s disappointed to be stuck at home and can only think about the hoopin’ competition. Distracted, Kameeka accidentally ruins Miz Adeline’s birthday cake, and has to confess to her that there won’t be a cake for her special day.” - from the webpage.

Theme Connection: Finding a creative way to say she’s sorry that there isn’t a cake means finding out a new facet of the neighbors and the most fun ever at a birthday party.

Lesson E:

Love Who You Are

(Inherent Worth Focus)

Theme Angle:

Our faith reminds us that we renew ourselves by being true to ourselves. This is captured most directly in our celebration of the “worth and dignity of every person.” It’s also captured in the words of the Joseph Campbell quote so many UUs love to quote: “Follow your bliss.” So what’s one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of renewal? It tells us, “Love who you are!”

Introduce It

(Wonder Box / Object Lesson)

Fingerprints

Reflection Object: a fingerprint

There are so many things that make us unique. Today, we pay attention to our fingerprints.

I’ve invited ___ to be our guest leader today to show us something special. [Invite the showing of the fingerprint.]

Every person’s fingerprint is unique to them. That’s why it is used to unlock a Smart phone. [Can the family of the co-leader demonstrate this?]

Take a look at your own fingerprints. Can you see the patterns?

“...Fingerprints are made of an arrangement of ridges, called **friction ridges**... You leave fingerprints on glasses, tables and just about anything else you touch...

All of the ridges of fingerprints form patterns called loops, whorls or arches:

- **Loops** begin on one side of the finger, curve around or upward, and exit the other side...
- **Whorls** form a circular or spiral pattern.
- **Arches** slope upward and then down, like very narrow mountains.” – from <https://science.howstuffworks.com/fingerprinting1.htm#:~:text=Fingerprints%20are%20the%20tiny%20ridges,developing%20fingers%20in%20the%20womb.&text=Fingerprints%20are%20made%20of%20an,sweat%20glands%20under%20the%20skin>.

There are other ways that you are unique in addition to your fingerprint. You love certain things which are unique to you, such as I love to canoe [or whatever]. Not everyone has to love canoeing. I feel back in balance after I go canoeing. It renews me. I wonder what special things you love to do to be happy. It doesn’t have to be like anyone else, just like a fingerprint. When you do these things you feel renewed and happy, too. We say that fingerprints are the only unique things about us. But its not the only thing that makes us unique. We all have special patterns and curves in our lives. Nobody throws the baseball the same. Sings the same. This is a part of our First Principle in Unitarian Universalism - the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

Lead With Suggestion: Invite a child ahead of time to be your guest leader. Work with their parents to have them find an ink pad and make a fingerprint on a piece of paper. Then for your object lesson have that child show (or pull out of a wonder box) the picture of their fingerprint.

Alternative way to capture your fingerprint: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZiUpaiuN8o>

Supplies: 2B pencil, scissors, paper, clear tape

Tell It and Talk About It (Story)

Lizard’s Song

Story from Tapestry of Faith, Creating Home

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/home/session4/60032.shtml>

Theme Connection: Part of loving who we are is resisting the social pressure to be like everyone else. We are most happy when we discover our “own song.” That’s what this story is all about...

Summary: In this Native American legend, Lizard sings a happy song about his home: “Zole, zole, zole, zole, zole, zole, rock is my home.” Bear wants to learn the song. Lizard shares the song, but Bear keeps forgetting it. Bear insists again and again that Lizard re-teach her the song. Finally Lizard tells Bear that the reason she can’t remember the song is that “rock” is not her home, “den” is her home. Bear goes off singing the adapted song, which she doesn’t forget.

Lead With Strategy: Invite a pet lizard to join you (or a family with a pet iguana) or use a lizard puppet.

Online Permission Note: Tapestry of Faith material has been authorized for online use. See

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/downloading>

As Fast As Words Could Fly Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_Zk4P50WT4

Written by: Pamela M. Tuck, Illustrated by: Eric Velasquez, Read by: Dulé Hill, Run time: 16 minutes

Copyright guidance for video: <https://www.storylineonline.net/comments-and-questions/>

Theme connection: Sometimes loving who you are means standing up for your worth. That’s what this story is all about.

Summary: “Young Mason Steele takes pride in turning his father’s excited ramblings about the latest civil rights incidents into handwritten business letters. One day Pa comes home with a gift from his civil rights group: a typewriter. Thrilled with the present, Mason spends all his spare time teaching himself to type. Soon he knows where every letter on the keyboard is located. When the civil rights group wins a school desegregation case, Mason learns that now he will be attending a formerly all-white high school. Despite his fears and injustice from the students and faculty, Mason perseveres. He does well in school—especially in his typing class. And when he competes in the county typing tournament, Mason decides to take a stand, using his skills to triumph over prejudice and break racial barriers.” The story is based on the author’s father’s personal experiences growing up in 1960’s North Carolina.

Lead With Strategy: Find a person involved in justice who would like to share something from their experience of taking a stand with dignity. Invite them for a short sharing, then offer the story video, then invite reflection together.

Meditate on It

(Meditation)

The Path to Your Inner Voice

Centering:

I invite you to move into our meditation position.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Sit up nice and tall.

Focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Meditation Suggested Script:

We are each special and unique. We each have something special and unique that we love to do, to renew ourselves. Travel in your imagination with me to hear your inner voice. It helps if you close your eyes. Take another deep breath. In and out.

Imagine that you are in a forest and see a path. Are there steppingstones on the path? Is it a twisted path or a straight path? Does it go up a hill or down into a valley? Follow your path. [Pause]

You walk on the path for a long time. It goes on and on and you begin to wonder if you are lost. You look around to see anything. You see a guide. What does the guide look like? [pause]

The guide beckons to you to come a little bit closer. It points to a large tree with a hole among the roots. You bend down and look into the hole and see a treasure box. You reach in and bring the treasure box out. Spend a few moments gazing at the locked treasure box. [pause]

Your guide reaches in its pocket and pulls out a key. Your guide hands you the key. Somehow you know that this is the key to your own unique inner voice. The guide smiles and nods at the treasure box. Your guide then leaves you, so you can be alone for this moment. Say goodbye and thanks to your guide. [pause]

You insert the key into the lock and slowly open the treasure box. You bring it up to your ear. There is a voice inside, speaking softly but clearly. You listen. It says, "Love who you are." It whispers more about the things you love to do, that are special to you. Take a few moments and listen to the voice as it describes what brings you joy. [pause]

Now, whisper in your own voice, some of the things that you love to do.

When you are done listening and whispering, take an imaginary look around you. Are there other beings around you? Who has appeared as you listened to your inner voice? Who supports you? Imagine these beings all around you, smiling at you because you have listened to your inner voice. [pause]

Now that you have heard from your inner voice, lock the treasure box, and place it back among the roots. Whenever you need to find your inner voice, you can look here and listen again. Place the key near the box. Step back and return on your path. [pause]

When you have returned to this place and this time, open your eyes and join us, remembering your inner voice.

Lead With Strategy: Is there a hiker with a meditative voice who could join you? A person with some magic in their eyes?

Explore It

(small group activities and experiential learning)

Option #1 - What Do YOU Love to Do? Online “Find ‘N Show”

Talking Points and Takeaways:

- Introduce the activity by highlighting how everyone has their own way of being in the world, their own special “song.”
- The important part of recognizing each person’s uniqueness is that you recognize the uniqueness in others. You recognize each person’s inherent worth, and are following our first UU principle.

Activity:

Invite the children to find something to share with everyone that they love to do. Invite the co-leader to start the sharing. Do they love to draw, bring their markers. Kick a ball, find their favorite ball. Read a book, tell everyone why you love it.

Love What you Do Add On: Fingerprint Drawings

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEaeDnl_Sc)

Invite them to make a fingerprint. If they don’t have a stamp pad, use the graphite from a 2B pencil, as demonstrated in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZiUpaiuN8o>

Draw what they love to do using their fingerprint and then share on screen with each other.

Chat about It Prompts/Questions:

- What was your favorite thing to do?
- Who taught you how to do it?
- When was the last time you were with that person who taught you?
- For fun, describe how fingerprints solved a crime in a movie or book they have read.

Lead With Strategy: a person willing to share what they love to do to renew themselves. (Join Toby as they share their love of soccer.)

Option #2 - “Your Favorites” Game

Talking Points and Takeaways:

- This is a simple but fun online game that celebrates the uniqueness of each of us but also uncovers some surprising connections between the players.

Activity Instructions: Have each child gather 6-8 sheets of blank paper and some crayons or markers. Then name some “favorite things” (see below) and give the children 1 minute to draw their answer. After the minute is up, have each child share their drawing - but here’s the catch - don’t have them say what it is. Instead have the others guess what the picture is of. Often it is easy to guess but it can be fun when the short drawing time makes it hard and others give answers that are way off and goofy.

Lead With Strategy:

Invite a person who loves to play games

There’s plenty of opportunity for meaningful discussion along the way. For instance, you can ask the kids to share when they discovered it was one of their favorite things. Or if anyone else in their family shares

it as a favorite. And best of all, when more than one child shares the same favorite thing, invite them to talk about why they love it so much or explore ways in which their love for it is subtly different.

Here are some “favorite prompts.” But have some fun creating your own too!

- What’s your favorite food?
- What’s your favorite movie?
- What’s your favorite candy bar?
- What’s your favorite sports team?
- What’s your favorite book?
- What’s your favorite season?
- What’s your favorite subject in school?

Take It Home (Home based activities)

This section provides ideas for your weekly follow-up emails to parents, giving them some ways to build on themes and activities you did in your online worship and groups.

Family Sharing Tips & Lesson Follow Up

- **Possible Script for Email:** “Hello Parents! During the Small Group time that was focused on how we are renewed by loving who we are, we played a game called “Our Favorites” and drew pictures of what we love to do. Invite your child(ren) to show you the pictures and try to guess what their favorites were.”
- Or “In meditation, we visualized a path to a treasure box with a key given by a guide. Invite your child(ren) to describe what they visualized and who was there.”
- Or “Share this Story Video: Catching the Moon: The Story of a Young Girl's Baseball Dream <https://www.storylineonline.net/books/catching-the-moon-the-story-of-a-young-girls-baseball-dream/>
Written by: Crystal Hubbard, Read by Kevin Costner and Jillian Estell, Suggested grade level: 3rd - 4th, Run time: 14 minutes

Summary: “If there was anything in the world better than playing baseball, Marcenia Lyle didn't know what it was. As a young girl in the 1930s, she chased down fly balls and stole bases, and dreamed of one day playing professional ball. With spirit, spunk, and a great passion for the sport, Marcenia struggled to overcome the objections of family, friends, and coaches, who felt a girl had no place in the field. When she finally won a position in a baseball summer camp sponsored by the St. Louis Cardinals, Marcenia was on her way to catching her dream...” – from the website <https://www.storylineonline.net/books/catching-the-moon-the-story-of-a-young-girls-baseball-dream/>

- **Or purchase or make a Journal: Me: A Compendium**
<https://vimeo.com/178109298>

A great way for parents to help their children dig deeper into this week’s work of loving and celebrating who you are! Or you could invite the children to create their own version.

Connecting with Other Families!

Family-to-Family Connection Events

Each month we suggest ideas for all-family or all-church events. While we can't connect in large groups in person during Covid, there are still creative ways to connect with other families online or by being careful and creative with some in-person events. We've identified five types of family-to-family activities that are Covid safe. Each month we will suggest one idea for each category and relate it to our monthly theme. Hopefully one or two of our suggestions will seem just right for you!

Show 'N Tell Online Event

Option #1 - Share Your Connection to Dismantling White Supremacy. What items keep the call of racial justice in front of you? What books, posters, dolls, foods, etc. inspire your family to include diversity in daily living?

Theme Connection: As we renew our commitment to dismantle white supremacy this month, we re-commit to including diversity in the fabric of our lives at home.

Option #2 - Who has the Biggest Zucchini and Weirdest Carrot? Or other produce or plant? Houseplants count too! It's just fun to see how our gardens and flower beds produce surprising creations and "creatures"!

Theme Connection: Working gardens and flower beds is one of the most renewing activities we do. So many of us consider it a spiritual practice to connect with the earth and help things grow. This is a fun way to celebrate this activity that means so much to so many of us.

Social Distancing Social

Drive-By Water Communion. Invite families to drive to a special place and bring their "Living Waters" from home or their own special place. Because of virus transmission issues, the waters will not go into a communal bowl, but rather back into the Water Cycle of Life. Families put the water back into the Water Cycle of Life by driving by and watering a tree, a bush, or adding it to a stream if you have a bridge over a body of water you can safely offer as a drivable event. Renew family community with an online chat afterwards about where their water might have come from and where it will go. Extra credit: Make a short video of all of the folks driving by, to share online at a later date.

Theme Connection: Connects with Water Communion ceremony

Healthy Souls Cooking Event

Cooking with What Mother Nature Gave us This Week! Invite a family to share online the how-to preparation of a specialty dish using their garden produce. What makes this fun during the fall is that different types of food are ready at different times, so every week one or two types of vegetables are the star of the show. And overflow our garden baskets! So this is a great way to help each other figure out what to do with all of the turnips and zucchini from this week!

Theme connection: For so many of us, cultivating our gardens is the primary way we renew our spirits. To celebrate that we are inviting this family to share their special recipe from their garden.

UUndercover Agents and your family's M.K.M (Monthly Kindness Mission)

Check out this [Google Doc](#) with more details about UUndercover Agents and M.K.M.!

Be a Weed Fairy Family. It's harvest season in many zones. Find out who needs help weeding and show up at 6 a.m. with a couple of other church families to socially distance weed the flower bed of a church member who has been going through a hard time or needs a bit of help. Or mow a lawn!

Theme connection: Acts of kindness renew the recipients and the givers!

Wider Community Service

School Supplies. Invite families to collect or fund school supplies for school children in need and share the backpacks or supplies they have gathered online with each other.

Theme Connection: The school year renews and going back to school, even if it has to be at home, is a lot more exciting when you have the supplies you need. Help others renew with excitement this year by providing them with the supplies they need.

Research your local organization, example [here](#) or Kids In Need Foundation
<https://www.kinf.org/about/our-mission/>

Opportunities for Leader Support

Come play and think together!

Online Zoom Labs

Brainstorming Labs

In our brainstorming labs, RE Leaders support Katie by sharing ideas for upcoming packets. Regular attendees like the way it gives them ideas in advance. The packets are always stronger when our sharing circle members pitch in their creativity!

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

- **Nov. theme of “Healing,” Wed. Aug. 5, 2020, 1 p.m. ET**

RE Leader Labs - Katie’s Overview and Group Sharing!

In our leader labs, Katie gives an overview of the packet for the next month’s theme, and then RE Leaders share challenges, opportunities and take-aways.

Meeting time: *Second Wednesday of each month at 1 pm Eastern. These Labs are recorded and posted on the YouTube Soul Matters Channel at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCe2pmT_ATh-pbkjF2m7rfOA*

- **Wed. July 8, 2020, 1 p.m. ET for “Adapting to Online RE” Overview**
- **Wed. Aug. 12, 2020, 1p.m. ET for September’s theme of “Renewal”**

Zoom Information:

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

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

Password: 333

Other Resources and Sources of Support

RE Leader Facebook Page

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

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

Inspiration Facebook Page

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

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

Soul Matters Music Playlists

We create two different playlists on the monthly theme each month: one in Spotify and another in YouTube. Music connects us to the themes in a way like nothing else.

Click [here](#) for links to the [Spotify playlists](#) for each month.

Click [here](#) to check out the [YouTube playlists](#).

“On the Road Together” - Soul Matters Senior High Youth Packet

A monthly packet for High School Youth Groups! Here's the link to the [Soul Matters Youth Packet](#) page on our website.

Sessions with resources for Check In, Spiritual Practice, Discussion Starters, Expressing Yourself with the Arts, Fun and Games, and Off-Road Excursions.

New! Chalice Home Family Ministry Home Life Guide

Each monthly Chalice Home packet will be designed to be sent to your families and will include a family worship and family activity that is built around adding a new item/symbolic object to your family's home "altar" or as we refer to it, "Chalice Home." These activities and objects will connect to our monthly themes and lift up a different source of spiritual nourishment. Here's the link to the Chalice Home page on our website:

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

Soulful Home Family Guides

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

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

There are three types of subscriptions: congregational, family and gift subscriptions. Check them all out!

If you don't purchase a congregational subscription, consider sharing the link in your church newsletter or the weekly emails you send to parents.

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

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

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Soul Matters

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