



Soul Matters

Crossing Paths

**Walking the Path
of Unitarian Universalism**

Includes Orientation Session

Online

CONTENTS

<u>Welcome</u>	Page 2
<u>Start-up Orientation for Parents and Youth</u>	Page 3
<u>Map Day</u> Getting a view of the terrain - A world of “many mountains” What is “religious pluralism” and how will it guide us?	Page 17
<u>Tack Day</u> Grounding ourselves in our own faith before we head out to explore the faith of others Introducing the weekly structure & the Eight Practices of Welcoming	Page 21
<u>Summit Day & Lake Day</u> (combined) Exploring our church home	Page 32
<u>Appendix</u> #1. 8 Practices of Welcome #2. 8 Practices Token Suggestions #3. Guest Interview #4. Many Mountains Multiple Choice Chart	Page 37

Welcome

Welcome to the first packet for Online Crossing Paths!

There's no doubt that online meetings have their challenges, but it also opens up opportunities. After scouring the web for the best strategies to keep online meetings fun and interactive, we're confident this new online environment will feel like a great adventure.

In addition to guiding you through an orientation for parents and youth, this packet focuses on our own faith: Unitarian Universalism. Crossing Paths is not just an interfaith learning program; its ultimate goal is to help youth build and clarify their own UU identity through engagement with other faiths. This is why we start by grounding youth in their own faith tradition.

Supporting you as a leader is a priority. So we've woven leader instructions and suggestions throughout the packet, as we do with all packets. For instance, the purpose and takeaways of each session are listed at the start of the session. Preparation tips and leader notes are at the beginning of each lesson. Additionally, we've included a number of suggested scripts and talking points throughout to help you present the material and introduce the activities in your own words.

The kick-off month is always a challenge. There is a lot of information to cover. We hope the details and leader notes in this guide help you navigate it all. By spending a little extra time carefully reviewing the leader notes and overall structure, you will save time later.

Mostly, we hope this startup packet leaves you excited. You are about to go on a great adventure and offer your congregation's youth a precious gift. Along the way, we hope - and know - you will find yourself the recipient of many gifts as well.

Katie & Scott, on behalf of the entire Soul Matters team

Katie Covey, Soul Matters Director of Religious Education
Rev. Scott Tayler, Soul Matters Team Lead

Start Up Orientation For Parents and Youth

Purpose

This startup orientation welcomes parents and youth to the Crossing Paths journey. Parents and youth will connect with each other and learn about the key components of the program, including:

- **Approach:** religious pluralism embodied in our guiding metaphor of “Many Mountains; Many Paths” & UU identify formation.
- **Weekly Flow:** “Map Day,” “Tack Day,” “Summit Day” & “Lake Day”
- **Faith Traditions:** The religions you will explore
- **Lenses (or “binoculars”) for Exploring Each Religion:** symbols, texts, understandings of divinity; founders, rituals, etc.
- **Skills to be Developed and Used on “Visits”:** “The 8 Practices of Welcoming”
- **Family Engagement:** “Dinner and Drive Time Tips”
- **Online Engagement Strategies:** How we are making online meetings fun and interactive

Preparation & Leader Notes

Parent Attendance

Remind parents that their involvement is important so they are aware of what their youth will experience. It is also important that they understand the program because parents are asked to engage their youth at home between meetings. This at-home engagement is even more important in this online version. With shorter sessions, we rely on the pre-session discussions (dinner and drive time tips) between parents and youth to “prime the pump.” Finally, remind parents that this is their journey too. Not only will they enrich themselves by having conversations with their youth, but they will also be invited into study and reflection of their own.

Given all this, we recommend that at least one parent be required to attend the orientation, or meet separately with you, the leaders, to go over the orientation information.

Length

1 hr. Zoom for youth and parent(s) plus a 30 - 40 min Parent Only session

Leader Tech Tips

As a leader for online Crossing Paths, you will need to be familiar with several skills on Zoom. We are all learning how to navigate online in many areas of our lives - medicine, school, work, and fun. So dive in with a playful mind, ready to make mistakes, and open attitude. And don't forget, many of the group members will be facile with these skills and can help you. "When in doubt, ask a 12 year old" is our motto.

1. Check out the following videos for the skills you will need to offer online Zoom:

- [How to play music on Zoom](#)
 - [Soul Matters' How to play music PDF](#)
- [How to use the "Raise Hand" feature on Zoom](#)
- [How to use the "Chat" feature on Zoom](#)
- [How to use the Meeting Controls on Zoom](#) (mute, invite, etc.)
- [How to toggle between speaker and gallery view](#)

2. You will be playing a lot of YouTube videos. Consider subscribing to [YouTube premium](#) to avoid the ads.

3. Help the class members get familiar with Zoom. Here's one example of a [How-To Video featuring Mr. Moose and Elmo](#)

Make a Crossing Paths Altar

One of the things that makes Zoom meetings vibrant is when the leader screen is visually attractive. The key to this is what's on the leader screen. So we recommend you create a centerpiece altar, featuring the symbols for the three Crossing Paths lifelines, a chalice as well as the Token Bowl for the 8 Practices of Welcome. In addition, here are some optional suggestions.

- Symbol flags: <http://www.northernsun.com/Religions-Flags-Banner-%286340%29.html>
- Tokens of Faith: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/pope-voices/>
- Golden rule poster: <https://www.scarboromissions.ca/product/golden-rule-across-the-worlds-religions>

Pre-Session Checklist

Before the orientation...

- Pick a specific Zoom link that you will use for the entire session. This will avoid confusion when signing on.
- Prepare the Crossing Paths altar in your home to provide a focus point for each session's worship and allow youth to witness it growing as the sessions progress. Purchase and gather items for the centerpiece "altar":
 - a spool of thread or yarn
 - a jump rope
 - netting
 - A variety of objects from world religions, i.e. a crucifix, Buddhist mala (prayer) beads, figurines of Shiva, etc.
 - Singing bowl or chime (for worship)
 - Chalice, matches, candle or LED candle (for worship)

- Gather other materials
 - make an online form for contact information from families
 - Chimes or [singing bowl](#).
 - pick the song you will use for the centering and mindfulness time. for this session we recommend:
Home by Phillip Phillips: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoRkntoHkIE>
 Alternative cover versions:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8tOLXedX24>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOWXXAwe80Q>

- Learn [How to play music on Zoom](#)

On the day of the orientation...

- Set up the centerpiece “altar” that includes:
 - A chalice
 - The various religious objects you’ve gathered
 - The chime, bell or singing bowl
 - The lifelines
- Make hand drawn signs for the 4 Stages: Map Day, Tack Day, Summit Day and Lake Day.
 - These can be a simple scrawl with a marker on a piece of paper or add some color, like John Kasinski’s [Some Good News hand drawn logo](#).
 - Enjoy a bit of “low tech” fun.
- Gather the symbols for the 4 Stages of the climb:
 - Map Day: a map and binoculars (other options listed in the session)
 - Tack Day: a backpack
 - Summit Day: a bowl with tokens for each of the 8 Practices of Welcoming (see Appendix #2)
- In the session you will be playing music from a YouTube video, so be sure to cue it up ahead of time and making sure your Zoom controls are set up to play the sound clearly. [Here’s how you do it.](#)

Orientation Session

Preparing for the Journey

Welcome (5 min)

- Welcome everyone to the orientation session and share your excitement about the year-long journey ahead of you.
- Review and explain how to use the Zoom features and how to navigate this online environment.
- Share one or two reasons why you are looking forward to this program.
- Explain that there will be a Treasure Hunt!
- Have the youth introduce themselves and their families by sharing everyone's names, one word that describes their feelings about this journey of learning about other faiths

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting (3 min)

Choose one of the choices below.

Invitation, By *Shel Silverstein*

If you are a dreamer, come in.
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,
A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer.
If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire,
For we have some flax golden tales to spin.
Come in! Come in!

The Longing for Home, By *Starhawk*

We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been—a place half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends.

Lighting the Chalice

*See [this video](#) for a demonstration of the hand signs. We encourage the addition of the hand signs as a way to better remember and engrain this opening which contains our UU theology in a nutshell.

We light this chalice in gratitude for the path we share, a path that calls us to:

listen to our deepest selves, [HAND SIGN - hands on heart]

open to life's gifts, [HAND SIGN - spread arms wide open]

And serve needs greater than our own. [HAND SIGN - cupped hands together in front of you]

Session Introduction (15 min)

The Theology that Grounds & Guides Us - The Three Lifelines of Unitarian Universalism

Introduce the UU theological framework that undergirds Crossing Paths.

Suggested Script/Talking Points:

- Welcome to our first Crossing Paths worship.
- In Crossing Paths, we will explore the featured religious traditions through different lenses, which we also call “binoculars” in keeping with our mountaineering metaphor.
- One of those lenses/binoculars is how each faith defines “the problem in the world” and “the solution” to that problem. For instance, Buddhism sees the problem in the world as suffering and the solution is Nirvana or enlightenment. Christians see the problem in the world as sin and the solution as salvation.
- We UUs have our own unique understanding of the problem and solution. Put simply, we have tended to see “separation” as the problem and “reconnection” as the solution. What grabs our attention and breaks our hearts as UUs is seeing how the world separates or disconnects people from their deepest selves, life’s gifts and each other.
- And so UUs respond by helping people restore those three sacred connections.
- Another way to put this is to say we offer people three “lifelines” that help people reconnect to:
 - their deepest self (self)
 - life’s gifts and joy (life)
 - and needs greater than our own (others)

Symbolic Reminders of the Lifelines:

- To remember and keep these three lifelines of UUism in front of us, we will keep three symbols of the lifelines on our centering altar:
 - So here’s a **spool of thread** to remind us of the fragile and sometimes hard to notice thread that tethers us to our deepest and most authentic self. Using thread also reminds us that our connection to self is one that needs constant care and “reweaving.”
 - And here’s a **jump rope** that reminds us of the importance of staying connected to life’s joys and gifts. Sometimes it’s easy to focus on life’s challenges and troubles. And so a central task of our faith is to remind us about and reconnect us to the joy and gifts that are always available to us.
 - Last but not least, here’s **netting** to remind us of the “interdependent web” and our relationships to each other. As our faith tells us, we are all bound up in “an inescapable and interdependent network of mutuality.” This interconnectedness comes with a responsibility to care for one another, to serve not only our own needs, but also the needs of others and the world around us.

The Lifelines in Our UU Chalice:

- Let's also pause for a moment to notice how these three lifelines are represented in the symbol of our [UU chalice](#):
 - The flame represents the connection to our inner light and deepest self. (Lifeline to self)
 - The two circles around the chalice symbolize our two faith traditions, with our Unitarian side lifting up the idea that people are inherently good, not sinful and our Universalist side lifting up the idea that the Spirit of Life strives to offer us grace and gifts, not judgement and punishment. Each in their own way reminds us to trust that life and other people are sources of joy and support. (Lifeline to life's gifts and joy)
 - The chalice bowl represents our common life together. We also like the way it represents a cup with which one uses to feed or offer drink to others. And in doing so, becomes a reminder of our calling to serve needs greater than our own. (Lifeline to others)

Lifting Up the Lifelines Each Week:

- Finally, remember our Chalice lighting words? This will be our way of remembering this UU Lifeline Theology through regular ritual. After saying it each week and including the hand signs to go with it, we will definitely remember by the end of the year. This is an important part of building our UU identity: it boils down our theology in a simple and memorable set of three phrases, thereby helping us remember it and even share it with others!

We light this chalice in gratitude for the path we share, a path that calls us to:

listen to our deepest selves, [HAND SIGN - hands on heart]

open to life's gifts, [HAND SIGN - spread arms wide open]

And serve needs greater than our own. [HAND SIGN - cupped hands together in front of you]

With all this in mind, let's explore our Lifelines theology with our centering ritual:

Centering Ritual (10 min)

Suggested Script/Talking Points:

- We will begin each session/meeting with a moment of “music-based mindfulness.” This weekly centering practice introduces the topic of the day and is made up of three core components:
 - Music to help us turn inward
 - A prompt question, and
 - Sharing (or as we playfully call it “mindful texting”)
- This week we’ve chosen **Home** by Phillip Phillips for our centering music. It’s a wonderful song that helps us think about reconnecting to our lifelines as “returning to and finding home.”
- During the song, we reflect on the prompt question and as answers arise we share them in the Zoom chat box. You might think of it as “mindful texting.”

Instructions:

- **Preparation:** Let’s begin by getting ourselves into a comfortable position. Straighten Your back. Relax your neck and shoulders. Soften your gaze. Finally, let’s take two deep breaths, breathing in through your mouth and exhaling through your nose.
- **Prompt Question:** Our prompt question today focuses on the first of our three lifelines: the connection to our deepest self. So as you listen to the music, ask yourself: **What activities or relationships allow you to feel most fully yourself?**
- **Sharing:** As answers to the question arise for you, type them into the chat box. [REMINDE THE YOUTH TO MAKE THEIR CHAT BOX VISIBLE BY CLICKING THE “CHAT” ICON ON THE CONTROL PANEL AT THE BOTTOM OF YOUR ZOOM SCREEN]
Deepen your reflection by viewing and thinking about the answers others type in. Sometimes reading the answers of others, stirs up new answers of your own. Feel free to type in those additional answers.

Ok, let’s begin... [Play music](#)

Home by Phillip Phillips

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

Closing Words

In the rest of our time together and in the days ahead,

May we listen to our deepest selves [hands on heart].

May we be open to life’s gifts [wide arms].

And may we be moved to serve needs greater than our own. [cupped hands]

Blessed be, Amen

Orientation Session Activity

Introducing The Program Schedule & Structure: One Mountain a Month & Four Stages of the Climb (25 min.)

Our Approach: The Path of Religious Pluralism

Suggested Script/Taking Points:

- Crossing Paths is rooted in religious pluralism. Instead of claiming that one religion is better than others or that all religions are really different ways to the same end, religious pluralism treats religions as separate systems of belief that address distinct human challenges. Rather than seeing all religions as different paths leading to the same mountaintop, this view sees each religion as its own uniquely beautiful mountain. Crossing Paths is about exploring a new “mountain” each month, thus our tagline “Many Mountains; Many Paths.”
- This approach is distinctly Unitarian Universalist. One sees it most clearly in the “[Six Sources](#)” we covenant to affirm and promote. These are listed in the front of our UU hymnal. From our beginning, we’ve honored the way our sibling faith traditions each notice a different aspect of the human condition and human struggle. There is no single struggle. There are many struggles of the human condition. We see each religion as focusing on a different one of these challenges and then developing spiritual practices or “spiritual technologies” to deal with that. So depending on which struggle you are experiencing, you might turn to that particular tradition (source) for guidance.
- We also want to credit a scholar named Stephen Prothero. We draw heavily on his work and find his articulation of “many mountains” religious pluralism to be the clearest and most compelling articulation out there. In one of our weekly emails to you, we will send parents a couple of links to Prothero’s work so you can explore this idea in more detail.

Our Weekly Structure: Four Stages of the Climb

Explain that you will playfully weave this metaphor of mountaineering throughout your entire time together. This includes how you are organizing the flow of the four monthly meetings. Explain that each meeting of the month will have a unique focus.

Below are talking points for each of the four weekly meetings. You can keep it simple and just verbally explaining the focus of each meeting, but we recommend you make it more interactive and fun by weaving in the below treasure hunt components:

Map Day - (hold up your sign)

Suggested Script/Talking Points:

- Show your map and binoculars (or a magnifying glass) as the core symbols for this day.
- Explain that Map Day is the first meeting of each month. This is when youth will learn about the basics of the religion they are exploring that month. In other words, this is the meeting we will look over the “map of the terrain.”
- To learn about the “terrain” of each religion we will use a number of different core “lenses” or “binoculars,” including such things as:
 - The Problem (The human struggle that the religion organizes itself around)
 - The Solution / The Path (What the religion offers in response to that “problem.”)
 - The faith’s symbols
 - Basic statistics (size, location, founding date)
 - Central spiritual practice
 - Understandings of Divinity
 - Key figures (founder, reformers, exemplars, major figures)
 - Holy days
 - Central stories
- **Treasure Hunt Option:**
 - *Invite the families to go on a quick treasure hunt around their home for as many maps and binocular-type objects they can find. Encourage them to be creative. For instance, if they don’t have a paper map lying around maybe they have a globe somewhere or a “map of the stars.” If they don’t have actual binoculars, they might grab a magnifying glass, telescope or even reading glasses!*
 - *Tell them they have 3 minutes. Have them pull up a timer app on their phone and set it for 3 minutes. Say “ready, set, go” and send them on their way, reminding them they must be back to the Zoom screen before their timers go off!*
 - *Have some fun sharing what each family collected and counting them up.*

Tack Day - (hold up your sign)

Suggested Script/Talking Points:

- Hold up a backpack as the core symbol for this day.
- Explain that Tack Day is the second meeting of each month. This is when youth “collect and check our *personal* tack.” When mountaineering, everyone makes climbs with gear that is unique to them. In a similar way, we don’t just learn about other religions; we engage those religions with and through our own unique beliefs. Thus, whereas Map Day focuses solely on each religion itself, Tack Day is the time we fill our packs with an awareness of how that religion and Unitarian Universalism are similar and different. This is what makes Crossing Paths a UU identity building program, not just an interfaith learning program.
- **Treasure Hunt Option:**
 - *Invite the families to go on a quick treasure hunt around their home for as many backpacks or backpack-like objects they can find. Encourage them to be creative. For instance, if they don’t have school or camping packs around, maybe they grab a reusable grocery bag or a baby carrier you put on your back.*
 - *Tell them they have 3 minutes. Have them pull up a timer app on their phone and set it for 3 minutes. Say “ready, set, go” and send them on their way, reminding them they must be back to the Zoom screen before their timers go off!*
 - *Have some fun sharing what each family collected and counting them up.*

Summit Day - (hold up your sign)

Suggested Script/Talking Points:

- Hold up your bowl with the symbols of our 8 Practices of Welcoming in it.
- Explain that Summit Day is the third meeting of each month. This is when youth “visit” that month’s religion through:
 - Exploring the faith community’s webpage
 - Watching videos of that faith in worship or doing one of their core spiritual practices
 - Interviewing, through Zoom, a leader from that faith community (or interviewing someone who is currently practicing in that tradition)
- However, this day is not just about gathering information about that month’s focus religion. Our goal is to teach the youth how to respectfully engage with other people of faith, and diversity in general. In other words, Crossing Paths doesn’t just fill our heads with knowledge, it helps us develop practices and skills that will help us throughout life as we engage views different from our own. This is yet another way that Crossing Paths is not just an interfaith learning program but also a UU identity building program.
- So at the heart of our program is what we call “The Eight Practices of Welcoming.” Using Handouts #1 and #2 in the appendix (and your altar’s object bowl), go through and explain the importance of each of the practices.
- **Treasure Hunt Option:**
 - *Point out that engaging and integrating inspiration from other religions is not necessarily unusual for UUs. Overtime, many families and parents have drawn from and collected objects and books on other religions. They might even integrate spiritual practices from other religions into their own spiritual life (yoga or meditation for instance). Or they might have held onto objects or practices from having grown up in a religion different from UUism.*
 - *With this in mind, invite the families to go on a quick treasure hunt around their home for as many interfaith objects they can find. Encourage them to be creative. For instance, a yoga mat, religious artifact or book on a different religion.*
 - *Tell them they have 3 minutes. Have them pull up a timer app on their phone and set it for 3 minutes. Say “ready, set, go” and send them on their way, reminding them they must be back to the Zoom screen before their timers go off!*
 - *Have some fun sharing what each family collected and counting them up.*

Lake Day - (hold up your sign)

Suggested Script/Talking Points:

- Hold up a swimsuit, beach towel or other object that represents relaxing or playing at a beach. You could also choose a camping chair or journal, something that represents sitting back and sinking into reflection on one’s journey.
- Explain that Lake Day is the fourth and last meeting of each month. This is when youth “come back from their travels” and “reflect by the lake.” In other words, it is when we discuss our takeaways from and reactions to Summit Day’s “visit.” We also integrate those learnings and talk about how we want them to shape and inspire our own beliefs and practices. This is an additional way the program helps our youth build their own UU identity.
- Also mention that we try to have fun on Lake Day. Nobody wants to miss out on celebrating a successful journey!. That’s why these Lake Day meetings are full of fun, games and play, not just serious reflection.

- **Treasure Hunt Option:**
 - *With this idea of celebrating and playing in mind, invite the families to go on a quick treasure hunt around their home for as many board games they can find. Encourage them to be creative. For instance, in addition to board games, some families might grab a baseball glove, hacky sack or tennis racket to represent the physical sports games they play together.*
 - *Tell them they have 3 minutes. Have them pull up a timer app on their phone and set it for 3 minutes. Say “ready, set, go” and send them on their way, reminding them they must be back to the Zoom screen before their timers go off!*
 - *Have some fun sharing what each family collected and counting them up.*

Summing Things Up:

- End this part of the session, by highlighting how playful this session has been so far. Note that this is a major component of Crossing Paths: fun and experiential learning, not just a dry presentation of facts and figures.
- Also point out that while this program is focused on the youth, it is committed to enriching the parents’ spiritual lives and strengthening the relationships between youth and their families. So there is “work” for parents to do with their youth and on their own.
- Recognizing this, we are going to close and say goodbye to the youth and keep parents here for a little extra information sharing.

Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice (5 min)

Thank the youth and parents for their participation in the orientation. Note one thing that you particularly appreciated or enjoyed about the session you just did with them.

Remind the youth what is happening next week and make sure they know what they have to do ahead of time. Note one thing that you are particularly looking forward to.

Share Closing Words of your choosing. You can read the Lifelines closing words from the centering section. Or re-read *The Longing for Home, By Starhawk*. Our UU Hymnals also have a number of closing words. Here’s another Lifelines-related Closing you can use as well:

*As we part,
 Be yourself, even when others want you to hide and fit in.
 Remember what is good, even when things aren’t going your way.
 And take care of those around you, knowing that none of us make it through our journeys alone.
 Go in peace. Go with joy.
 Amen.*

Extinguish the Chalice.

Parents Only Session (30 - 40 min. total)

We recommend doing this extended parent orientation right after the Whole Family Orientation. It makes for a long day, but we believe it's important to keep parents' focus while you have their attention, and after you've just gone through the rest of the orientation information. But be sure to at least give the parents a 10-15 minute break! :)

However if you want to avoid longer screen times you can schedule this additional part at a different time or on a different day.

Introductions

Invite parents to introduce themselves (if you are starting a new meeting) and/or answer the following prompt: What was the faith or no faith of your childhood? What other connections to you have to other faiths?

I. Overview

Explain the things you will cover in this parents-only session:

- Collect contact information. Review methods of communications
- What we need from you (Parent responsibilities and involvement)
- Review this year's focus religions
- Explain family engagement strategies (i.e. "Dinner and Drive Time Tips").
- Share the Crossing Paths Online Engagement Strategies: How we are making online meetings fun and interactive
- Explain that Crossing Paths is about UU Identity Building, not just interfaith learning

II. Contact Information & Communication Methods (10 min.)

- Make sure everyone has sent you their contact information. Review it. Gather new information now if any is missing. We suggest an online Google Doc link that can be listed in the Chat Box that they can fill in.
- Decide as a group what your method of communication will be. Most groups will use email to keep it simple, but some may want to set up a group like Facebook, What's App or Google to communicate and interact with each other in a more robust way.

III. Parent Involvement (10 min)

Go over the various responsibilities you need the parents to commit to, including:

- Explain the Dinner and Drive Time Tips, impressing upon them how integral they are to the program. Also stress that these Dinner and Drive Time activities are important for their own nourishment and spiritual development.
- A word about attendance. We all have busy lives. Crossing Paths works best if you prioritize attendance to succeed. Discuss your strategy and expectations when youth have to miss a session. In most cases, have the youth and parents contact you, the leader, to catch up.
- Encourage the parents to go over, with their youth, the technical parts of using your chosen online meeting platform. Here's one example of a [How-To Video featuring Mr. Moose and Elmo](#)
- Create a comfortable *and private* space where your youth can enjoy their online meetings.
- Help your youth remember the dates and times for the various meetings and interviews.

IV. This Year's Focus Religions (5 min.)

- Explain which religions you've decided to focus on this year and which months you will focus on each.
- Share some of your rationale for choosing the ones you did.
- Explain that you will send them a follow up email that contains this information in it.

V. Introducing "Dinner and Drive Time Tips" & Celebrating Family Engagement - (5 min.)

Talking Points

- We want to empower you to engage your youth in what they are learning and experiencing. In other words, we want this to be a family journey.
- We also want to invite you to learn and deepen your own faith through talking with your youth and engaging some material on your own. In other words, we want you to share in the journey.
- So we will regularly email you "Dinner and Drive Time Tips."
- These tips support engagement with your youth during those strategic moments when you have your youth's attention, like dinner time or while driving them to or from events.
- These tips will help your youth be better prepared for the upcoming session. We will send you questions to talk about with your youth before and after each session.
- These emails will also include tips and suggestions for your own reflection. We don't just want you to ask your youth what they are doing; we want your youth's experience to be an invitation for you to reflect on your own faith and deepen your understanding of other faiths.

Here's an example:

Before: *This Sunday we will explore the Eight Practices of Welcoming. Read over the list of practices. Pick the one you find the most challenging. Share that with your youth and ask them which one they think will be most challenging to them.*

After: *Ask your youth about the games they played to learn about the Eight Practices. Ask them if they think any of the practices will help them with their relationships with friends or others outside of church.*

For You: *Spend some time thinking about how the Eight Practices show up (or don't show up) in your own life. Is there a practice you need to spend some time learning or developing?*

VI. Online Engagement Strategies

Explain some of the ways we are ensuring that online meetings remain fun and interactive:

- **Shorter Sessions:** Screen time wears you down. So instead of past year's 1 ½ hour - 2 hour sessions, all of our online sessions are one hour long
- **Games designed for online:** You don't have to get together in person to play together. We've researched the web for great online games. And you've already had a taste of how online meetings still allow games that get us moving: the treasure hunts!
- **Use of Zoom Technology:** Zoom has number of capabilities that can be harnessed to enhance engagement:
 - Hand raising for games
 - Chat box for meditative sharing ("mindful texting")
 - Playing videos and movies
 - Use of camera on and off to "hide" for games
 - Toggling between gallery view and speaker view
- **Attention to the visual component of being together online:** Screens aren't just for our faces. We encourage leaders to use their screens to "house" the visual and symbolic elements of the program. For instance, the group centerpiece altar and bowl of tokens that represent the 8 practices of welcoming.

VII. Building UU Identity

Talking Points

- Crossing Paths is about UU Identity Building, not just interfaith learning.
- We want youth to leave the program with a deeper and more clear understanding of their own faith.
- In other words, Crossing Paths is all about deepening our own faith by engaging the faith of others.
- We accomplish this through a number of UU identity building strategies, including:
 - Teaching youth a simple and memorable theology of UUism (The three lifelines)
 - Regularly lifting up that theology in our chalice lightings and closing words
 - Using and teaching the distinctively UU "8 Practices of Welcoming"
 - Setting aside Lake Day to reflect on what personally inspired youth about each religion and integrating that into their own faith beliefs and practices
 - Reflecting on the similarities and differences between UU and each faith in Tack Sundays.

VIII. Closing

Re-Share Closing Words of your choosing.

Ask if there are any final questions. Thank the parents for their involvement.

You can read the Lifelines closing words from the centering section. Or re-read The Longing for Home, By Starhawk. Our UU Hymnals also have a number of closing words. Here's another Lifelines-related Closing you can use as well:

*As we part,
Be yourself, even when others want you to hide and fit in.
Remember what is good, even when things aren't going your way.
And take care of those around you, knowing that none of us make it through our journeys alone.
Go in peace. Go with joy.
Amen.*

Session One

Map Day

(Religious Pluralism and Many Mountains)

Purpose

- Introduce & explore the Crossing Paths approach of religious pluralism: “Many Mountains; Many Paths.”
- Help the youth understand that this “many mountains” version of religious pluralism is distinctly UU.

Preparation & Leader Notes

Leader Background

Each month, we will suggest resources for you, as a leader, to deepen your knowledge of the religions we are focusing on. This month, we suggest you educate yourself the philosophy of religious pluralism:

- A short talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cGZfUmbuOg>
- A longer talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25LyjRW73Zc>

Dinner and Drive Time Tips (Email to parents ahead of time):

Before:

1. This week we’re going to explore in depth the idea of “many mountains, many paths” using a wisdom story called *The Blind Men and the Elephant*. You can find it at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vn9BUfUCL4I>. Watch it ahead of time and discuss it with your youth. This will help them be prepared to share their personal take on the story with the other youth.

2. Have some fun with your youth learning the technical skills for Zoom using this wonderfully playful video: [How-To Video featuring Mr. Moose and Elmo](#)

After: We will play some games to illustrate what it’s like when we assume we all have different but equally valid perspectives rather than assuming we hold “the one right view.” View [this Google slide deck](#) we used and have your youth guide you through it.

For You:

1. Spend some time thinking about your own understanding of religious diversity by watching one or both of these videos featuring religious scholar Stephen Prothero:

- A short talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cGZfUmbuOg>
- A longer talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25LyjRW73Zc>.

2. Even though *Crossing Paths* honors the distinctiveness of each religion, it is also true that religions share important values. There is both uniqueness and similarity. To reflect on some of these shared values,

watch the video of *The Interfaith Amigos*: TEDx talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPnZArtsG_c

3. Watch the video “Have a Little Faith with Zach Anner”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0Zadc4BTAM> What do you know about some of the religions he uses in his interview?

Pre-Session To Do List:

- Email the above Dinner and Drive Time Tips to the parents.
- Cue up the YouTube videos that are part of this session.
- Gather the items for your leader screen centerpiece altar, including a chalice and candle.

Session

Getting a View of the Terrain - A World of Many Mountains

Centering & Session Introduction - (10 min)

Centering Sound

Invite everyone to calm and center themselves. Use whatever ringing vessel you have chosen (chimes, bowl, bell.) Ring the bell/bowl/chimes. Once the sound ends, pause for a moment of silence and then end by saying “Amen,” “Let us begin” or blessing words of your own.

Lighting the Chalice

*See [this video](#) for a demonstration of the hand signs. We encourage the addition of the hand signs as a way to better remember and engrain this opening which contains our UU theology in a nutshell.

We light this chalice in gratitude for the path we share, a path that calls us to:

listen to our deepest selves, [HAND SIGN - hands on heart]

open to life's gifts, [HAND SIGN - spread arms wide open]

And serve needs greater than our own. [HAND SIGN - cupped hands together in front of you]

Introduction & Prompt Question

Talking points:

- Each month we are going to explore a different religion.
- But first we are going to ground ourselves in our own faith tradition, UUism.
- One of the things that makes us unique as a faith is our rituals and one of our most widely-celebrated rituals is [Water Communion](#).
- It is a time when we all share things that “fill us up” and “replenish us” just like water replenishes people by drinking it or by visiting bodies of water to feel better.
- With Covid, most of us have not been able this summer to do the things that normally replenish us, like travel or going to our favorite swimming pools or even seeing our friends. So we’ve all had to find new things to make us feel good.
- So today we’re going to use our mindfulness moment to think about and share the new things we’ve done this summer to replenish us and make us feel good.
- To help us center us and to help us think about that, we’re going to listen to a song by a musical group called Sweet Honey in the Rock. The song is called Wade in the Water.
- As you listen to the song, think about the things you did this summer to feel good, things that filled you up like water fills you up when you are thirsty. As your answers come to mind, type them into the Zoom chat box. [REMINDE THE YOUTH TO MAKE THEIR CHAT BOX VISIBLE BY CLICKING THE “CHAT” ICON ON THE CONTROL PANEL AT THE BOTTOM OF YOUR ZOOM SCREEN]
- Read and reflect on what others are typing in. This may lead you to thinking about other things you did. When those new ideas come up, type them in the box too.

- Let's begin by getting ourselves into a comfortable position. Straighten Your back. Relax your neck and shoulders. Close your eyes or soften your gaze. And let's take two deep breaths, breathing in through your mouth and exhaling through your nose. And now let's begin...
- [\[PLAY THE MUSIC\]](#)

Music for Centering

Wade in the Water

Sweet Honey in the Rock

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRpzEnq14Hs>

Closing

In the rest of our time together and in the days ahead,

May we listen to our deepest selves [hands on heart].

May we be open to life's gifts [wide arms].

And may we be moved to serve needs greater than our own. [cupped hands]

Blessed be, Amen

Session Activity #1

A Favorite UU Story that Captures Our Belief in “Many Mountains, Many Paths” (15 min)

Talking Points

- This week’s focus is on what makes us unique as UUs.
- One of those things is how we think about other religions.
- Some religious people believe that their religion is the only “true religion.” They think their beliefs are the only way to think about life and that other religions are wrong or misguided. This is NOT what UUs believe.
- We believe that religions are not right or wrong, but instead that every religion just notices a different piece of what is important about being human. Kind of like how you and your friends can look at clouds in the sky and each notice a different image in them. Each person sees something different depending on their different perspective.
- We UUs teach this lesson by sharing a favorite story called The Blind Men and the Elephant.
- You probably have heard it before but let’s listen to it again...

Story

The Blind Men and the Elephant

Tell or play the video of the story:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vn9BUfUCL4I>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20071013094305/http://www.spiritual-education.org/blindmenelephants.pdf>

Discuss. Here are some reflection questions to choose from:

- What do you think the story means?
- How would you put the moral of the story in your own words?
- Have you ever gotten into an argument about something like the three blind wise men did?
- Did you think you were right and your friends or family were wrong?
- How did you resolve the argument?
- How would you handle the argument now if you had the chance to did it all over again?

Now let’s keep exploring this idea by playing a couple of games...

Session Activity #2 (15 min)

“There’s More Than One Way to Look Something” Game

- Using [this Google slide deck](#), show the youth a variety of “ambiguous images” on your Zoom screen.
- Turn it into a non-competitive game by first having everyone say what they first saw when they looked at it.
- Then have those who saw one image help guide the others in seeing what they saw. And then reverse it and have the other half guide the first group in seeing what they saw.
- Use this mutual helping activity to illustrate what it’s like when we assume we all have different but equally valid perspectives rather than assuming we hold “the one right view.” When we assume we are right, we end up arguing or demeaning the other. When we assume everyone as different perspectives, we naturally work to explain our perspective and work to understand the perspectives of others.
- Consider tying this activity to #2, #3 and #5 of our 8 Practices of Welcoming (See Appendix #1 for the entire list):
 - #2 - Be curious
 - #3 - Be open to being changed
 - #5 - Be an appreciative listener

Session Activity #3 (15 min)

Many Mountains Multiple Choice Game -

A game to celebrate and name the many mountains we will explore

Instructions: This is a multiple choice game that brings home the idea that each religion has its very unique focus and path. It invites the youth to try their best to match each religion to its distinct understanding of the human problem and solution to that problem. During each round of the game, a clue is read. The clue is the problem or solution of one of the religions we are exploring. Then all of the youth vote (by raising their “Zoom Hand”) when they think the correct answer (religion) has been named.

For instance: Clue: This faith believes that the Problem in the World is SEPARATION.
Answer: Unitarian Universalism

Here are the steps to use for each round:

- Read the clue to the group.
- Then read the list of faiths one by one. Use the list of faiths you will be visiting. See the entire list of faiths covered in [Crossing Paths](#) in Appendix #4.
- Invite the group to [raise their Zoom hands](#) when they hear the faith name which they think is associated with the clue. Encourage wild guesses!
- Count the hands for each faith.
- Award a point to each person that correctly paired the religion with its problem or solution.
- Take a moment to explain a bit more about each correct pairing.

Add up everyone’s points along the way. Celebrate the one with the most points as the “Royalty of the Religious Mountains.” A fun take on “King of the mountain.” Get it! :)

Here is the list of clues and answers we recommend. If you want to add more or develop your own, see Appendix #4 for a chart that lays out each religion and its unique problem statement, solution statement, key figure and symbol:

Round One:

Clue: This faith believes that the Solution of the World is NIRVANA.
Answer: Buddhism

Round Two:

Clue: This faith believes that the Problem of the World is DISCONNECTION FROM YOUR INNER LIGHT.
Answer: The Quakers

Round Three:

Clue: This faith believes that the Solution of the World is SUBMISSION TO GOD.
Answer: Islam

Round Four:

Clue: This faith believes that the Problem of the World is WANDERING.
Answer: Hinduism

Round Five:

Clue: This faith believes that the Problem in the World is SALVATION BY FAITH & WORKS.
Answer: Catholicism

Round Six (bonus round worth 2 points):

Clue: This faith’s main symbol is OM.
Answer: Hinduism

Looking Ahead - What to do ahead of time or expect (3 min)

Thank the youth for their participation this week. Note one thing that you particularly appreciated or enjoyed about the session you just did with them.

Remind the youth what is happening next week and make sure they know what they have to do ahead of time. Note one thing that you are particularly looking forward to.

Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice (2 min)

Share Closing Words of your choosing. You can read the Lifelines closing words from the centering section. Our UU Hymnals also have a number of closing words. Here's another Lifelines-related Closing you can use as well:

As we part,

Be yourself, even when others want you to hide and fit in.

Remember what is good, even when things aren't going your way.

And take care of those around you, knowing that none of us make it through our journeys alone.

Go in peace. Go with joy.

Amen.

Extinguish the Chalice

Session Two

Tack Day

Adding the UU “Lifelines” Theology & The 8 Practices of Welcoming to our Backpacks

Purpose

- Explore the Unitarian Universalist theology of connection
- Introduce the “Eight Practices of Welcome,” explaining them not only as skills we will use on our visits, but also distinctive UU practices/skills for engaging life in general.

Preparation & Leader Notes

Dinner and Drive Time Tips (Email to parents prior to the meeting):

Before: *In our meeting this week, we will discuss the three UU lifelines we introduced during our family orientation session:*

- *listening to our deepest self*
- *opening to life’s gifts and joy*
- *serving needs greater than our own*

Share with your youth which of these core UU practices is most central to your religious life right now. Invite your youth to reflect on which one fits where they are in their life right now.

After: *Ask your youth about the game they played to learn about the Crossing Paths Eight Practices of Welcoming. Ask them if they think any of the practices will help them with their relationships with friends or others outside of church.*

For You: *Spend some time exploring how other UUs frame and describe our UU beliefs by exploring this webpage: <https://www.uua.org/blueboat/faith/can-unitarian-universalists-really-believe-anything%3F>. While Crossing Paths uses the frame of the three lifelines, there’s a wonderful diversity of other frames out there.*

Pre-Session To Do List:

- Email the above Dinner and Drive Time Tips to the parents.
- Cue up the YouTube videos that are part of this session.
- Gather the items for your leader screen centerpiece altar, including a chalice and candle.
- Gather the materials for the Three Lifelines: spool of thread or yarn, jump rope, netting.
- Find a shoelace to use as a demonstration for “Making the Web Real” Game Two.
- Use the suggestions in Appendix #2 to pick the class tokens and gather them ahead of time.

Session

Centering & Session Introduction - (10 min)

Preparation

Paper and pens/pencils/ markers for writing or drawing a time when they felt welcomed.

Centering Sound

Invite everyone to calm and center themselves. Use whatever ringing vessel you have chosen (chimes, bowl, bell.) Ring the bell/bowl/chimes. Once the sound ends, pause for a moment of silence and then end by saying “Amen” or blessing words of your own.

Lighting the Chalice

*See [this video](#) for a demonstration of the hand signs. We encourage the addition of the hand signs as a way to better remember and engrain this opening which contains our UU theology in a nutshell.

We light this chalice in gratitude for the path we share, a path that calls us to:

listen to our deepest selves, [HAND SIGN - hands on heart]

open to life’s gifts, [HAND SIGN - spread arms wide open]

And serve needs greater than our own. [HAND SIGN - cupped hands together in front of you]

Introduction & Prompt Question

Talking points:

- Today, we’re going to further explore the three UU lifelines we introduced during our family orientation session:
 - listening to our deepest self
 - opening to life’s gifts and joy
 - serving needs greater than our own
- For today’s centering and mindfulness time, let’s focus on the second life line.
- We rarely have perfect days. There’s always a problem or worry or stress that places a cloud over our day. It’s all too easy to let that cloud take up our entire view and all our attention.
- That’s why the work of remembering and opening to life’s gifts and joy is so important. UUs believe that this is a central role of religious community: to help each other remember that the glass is never fully empty, but instead always is partially full.
- By focusing on these parts of our life that are joyful and full of gifts, we not only feel better but we also “save” our days.
- In honor of this, we’re going to use our mindfulness moment today to think about all the activities and people that make us happy and help us “open to life’s gifts and joy.”
- To help center ourselves and think about what brings us joy, we’re going to listen to a song by the musician, Pharrell Williams. Yes, you can guess it: It’s Happy!

- As you listen to the song, bring to mind the activities and people that help you when you're feeling down and make you happy again. As your answers come to mind, type them into the Zoom chat box. [REMINDE THE YOUTH TO MAKE THEIR CHAT BOX VISIBLE BY CLICKING THE "CHAT" ICON ON THE CONTROL PANEL AT THE BOTTOM OF YOUR ZOOM SCREEN]
- Also read and reflect on what others are typing in. This may lead you to thinking about other things that make you happy. When those new ideas come up, type them in the box too.
- Let's begin by getting ourselves into a comfortable position. Straighten Your back. Relax your neck and shoulders. Soften your gaze. Finally, let's take two deep breaths, breathing in through your mouth and exhaling through your nose. And now let's begin...

[\[PLAY THE MUSIC\]](#)

Music for Centering

Happy

Pharrell Williams

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6Sxv-sUYtM>

Closing Words

In the rest of our time together and in the days ahead,

May we listen to our deepest selves [hands on heart].

May we be open to life's gifts [wide arms].

And may we be moved to serve needs greater than our own. [cupped hands]

Blessed be, Amen

Session Activity #1

Reviewing & Playing with Our Three UU Lifelines (15 min)

Start by briefly reviewing the three lifelines theology, referring back to the lifelines' symbols on the worship table (spool of thread, jump rope and webbing).

In the orientation we talked about the three lifelines.

- UU's offer people three "lifelines." A lifeline back to:
 - their deepest self (self)
 - life's gifts and joy (life)
 - and needs greater than our own (others)
- To remember and keep these three lifelines of UUism in front of us, we will keep three symbols of the lifelines on our centering altar:
 - **a spool of thread** to remind us of the fragile and sometimes hard to notice thread that tethers us to our deepest and most authentic self. Using thread also reminds us that our connection to self is one that needs constant care and "reweaving."
 - **a jump rope** that reminds us of the importance of staying connected to life's joys and gifts. Sometimes it's easy to focus on life's challenges and troubles. And so a central task of our faith is to remind us about and reconnect us to the joy and gifts that are always available to us.
 - **netting** to remind us of the "interdependent web" and our relationships to each other. As our faith tells us, we are all bound up in "an inescapable and interdependent network of mutuality." This interconnectedness comes with a responsibility to care for one another, to serve not only our own needs, but also the needs of others and the world around us.

Move through this informational part rather quickly and then explain that sometimes playing with ideas is more fun than just talking about them. So let's play a Three Lifelines game!

[Choose one of the following two games]

Game One

Connecting to Our Inner Self: Catching the Thread Game

Use the virtual mime lifelines from the orientation and "toss" the symbol of the first lifeline (spool of thread) from screen to screen. Say "Here's a lifeline to Sienna" as you imaginatively throw the spool of thread to the screen of one of the youth. Invite them to play along and mime catching it.

Then after catching the imaginary spool of thread, invite the person to share, as they are comfortable, their answers to the following question: **When do you feel "most you"?**

Invite the youth to express it in one word. For instance: "I feel most me when I am... adventurous, kind, silly, questioning, quiet..."

Then have them toss the imaginary spool of thread to another youth, saying their name. Keep it up until every youth has had a chance to catch the spool and answer the question.

Game Two

Making the Web Real Game

- Invite all the youth to pull a shoelace from their shoe or go to their closet or parents closet to get a shoelace. Make sure the screen is in gallery view so everyone can see each other.
- Remind them about the third lifeline: serving needs greater than our own. Stress that UUs believe our commitment to serving and helping others is rooted in the idea that we are all tied together by an interdependent web of which we are all a part. (Reference the webbing symbol you keep on your centering “altar.”)
- Then challenge the group to “make our web of connection real” by working together to link everyone’s shoelace to the shoelaces of others on the screen. The goal is to have one end of your shoelace from your zoom screen connect to the end of someone else’s shoelace on their zoom screen until it looks as if one large shoelace is flowing from one screen to another, connecting them all.
- When the group succeeds, take a screenshot and send the picture to everyone by text or email.

Session Activity #3

Introducing The Eight Practices of Welcoming (5 min)

Suggested Script/Talking Points

- Introduce the idea of “spiritual practices” with something like: Practice can be a confusing word. It helps to think about other ways we use the word, such as “soccer practice” or “practicing the piano.” That is one meaning of the word. We are going to use it in a different way.
- Just like we practice making ourselves better at a sport or at playing an instrument, religions invite people to do disciplined activities to better themselves, to continually improve *who* they are.
- For instance, prayer is a spiritual practice that helps people get better at listening for God’s voice or listening to that “still small voice within.” Yoga and meditation are other spiritual practices that help people get better at calming themselves or gaining control over those inner worried voices we often hear in our head.
- For Unitarian Universalists, welcoming and being open to different ideas is a key spiritual practice. We work hard to welcome in and be open to different opinions, human diversity and different religious beliefs. By being open to new ideas, people and experiences we grow as people. Or as UUs sometimes say, we become “more whole” by welcoming in new things.
- During the following months, we are going to be exploring a lot of new religious ideas, practices and stories. It’s not easy to do. So we’re going to “tack up” with eight very specific practices that will help us along our way.
- We are going to spend the rest of our time today learning about them. Well, let me clarify: We’re going to spend a little time listening to me explain the eight practices and then we’re going to spend most of our time in a Treasure Hunt that will help us have some fun with them! Are you ready?!

Use *Appendix #1* and the bowl of the eight symbols of welcoming practice to explain the eight practices to your youth. Spend some time in advance thinking about how to put the importance of each in your own words. It helps if you can give a personal example of how you’ve used each of the practices in your own life.

1. Be fully present
2. Be curious
3. Be open to being changed
4. Be comfortable with discomfort
5. Be an appreciative listener.
6. Be light-hearted (remember this is fun and play not work)
7. Be gentle (mistakes will be made; forgiveness is possible)
8. Be yourself

Note to Leaders:

- Point out and use the bowl you have chosen as a Tack Bowl on the worship table.
- Gather the Tokens for your bowl that will be a part of your centerpiece (see suggestions in *Appendix #2*)
- Make sure the youth know you are keeping it on the table all year as a reminder of what we all commit to practicing.

8 Practices Treasure Hunt (25 min)

Use Appendix #2 as a guideline, invite the youth to find something in their home which symbolizes each of the 8 Practices of Welcoming.

Read each practice one at a time and give them 3 minutes to find something and bring it back. Then each person shares what they chose and why it represents the practice, i.e. this is my favorite stuffed bear and it represents “being gentle” because I cuddle him when I am sad.

Alternative and extra games to play with the 8 Practices

If you have more time or want some alternative games to play, here are some options:

For Practice #1 or #5: Be Fully Present or Practice #5 - Be an Appreciative Listener

Play this video: The Bad Listener - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=humfZQI4JU8>

After playing it, invite the youth to tell a story about someone in their life that is an equally bad listener.

For Practice #6 - Be Light-Hearted

- Be silly together and do a Lip Sync Contest
- Have a youth pull up a music video of their choosing from YouTube.
- Ask for a volunteer who accepts the challenge of lip syncing the first 15 seconds of the song.
- That volunteer then get to pick and play the next song
- do a few rounds.

Looking Ahead - What to do ahead of time or expect (3 min)

Thank the youth for their participation this week. Note one thing that you particularly appreciated or enjoyed about the session you just did with them.

Remind the youth what is happening next week and make sure they know what they have to do ahead of time. Note one thing that you are particularly looking forward to.

Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice (2 min)

Share Closing Words of your choosing. You can read the Lifelines closing words from the centering section. Or re-read The Longing for Home, By Starhawk. Our UU Hymnals also have a number of closing words. Here’s another Lifelines-related Closing you can use as well:

*As we part,
Be yourself, even when others want you to hide and fit in.
Remember what is good, even when things aren’t going your way.
And take care of those around you, knowing that none of us make it through our journeys alone.
Go in peace. Go with joy.
Amen.*

Extinguish the Chalice.

Session Three

Summit & Lake Day

Exploring Our Faith & Church Home

Purpose

- Share what you miss most about church now that Covid is not letting us meet in person
- Explain and experience what future Summit Days will be like

Preparation & Leader Notes

Combined Sessions

Because of Labor Day Weekend and Water Communion, there are only 3 Sundays available for curriculum offerings in September. So we are combining Summit and Lake Sundays.

Dinner and Drive Time Tips (Email to parents prior to the meeting):

***Before:** In our upcoming session, we will talk about some of the favorite things about our church community, things that the youth especially miss because Covid has kept them from experiencing them. As a way of getting your youth's thinking started, share a few of the things you miss most about being together in the church building.*

***After:** Ask your youth to share their favorite part of the interview.*

***For You:** Make a special effort in the coming week to reach out by phone, email or Facebook messenger to someone you miss from your congregation.*

Pre-Session To Do List:

- Email the above Dinner and Drive Time Tips to the parents.
- Cue up the YouTube videos that are part of this session.
- Gather the items for your leader screen centerpiece altar, including a chalice and candle.
- Choose which Centering Music you will play.
- Pull up your congregation's website address so you can share it with the group.
- Recruit a parent or other congregant who has been a church member or UU for a number of years. Invite them to your online meeting. Share Appendix #3 with them and let them know the youth will be asking them the questions listed. Invite them to think of some questions they might like to ask the youth.

Session

Centering & Session Introduction - (10 min)

Centering Sound

Invite everyone to calm and center themselves. Use whatever ringing vessel you have chosen (chimes, bowl, bell.) Ring the bell/bowl/chimes. Once the sound ends, pause for a moment of silence and then end by saying “Amen” or blessing words of your own.

Lighting the Chalice

*See [this video](#) for a demonstration of the hand signs. We encourage the addition of the hand signs as a way to better remember and engrain this opening which contains our UU theology in a nutshell.

We light this chalice in gratitude for the path we share, a path that calls us to:

listen to our deepest selves, [HAND SIGN - hands on heart]

open to life’s gifts, [HAND SIGN - spread arms wide open]

And serve needs greater than our own. [HAND SIGN - cupped hands together in front of you]

Introduction & Prompt Question

Talking points:

- Summit Day is when we virtually “visit” a faith community of the religion we are exploring that month. I will say more about that in a moment.
- First, let's focus on how hard it is not to be able to attend our own church communities in person because of Covid.
- It's hard to not be able to be together in person as a church community.
- One upside to Covid keeping us away from church is that we develop an appreciation for the wonderful things about church that we may have taken for granted.
- So for today's centering and mindfulness time, let's spend some time remembering and lifting up some of those things we miss most about being together in person at church.
- To help center us and to help us think about that, we're going to listen to a song that's connected to coming back to our church home. [NAME THE SONG OPTION]
- As you listen to the song, bring to mind the activity you miss from in-person church. As your answers come to mind, type them into the Zoom chat box. [REMIND THE YOUTH TO MAKE THEIR CHAT BOX VISIBLE BY CLICKING THE “CHAT” ICON ON THE CONTROL PANEL AT THE BOTTOM OF YOUR ZOOM SCREEN]
- Read and reflect on what others are typing in. This may lead you to thinking about other things that make you happy. When those new ideas come up, type them in the box too.

- Let's begin by getting ourselves into a comfortable position. Straighten Your back. Relax your neck and shoulders. Soften your gaze. Finally, let's take two deep breaths, breathing in through your mouth and exhaling through your nose. And now let's begin...
- [\[PLAY THE MUSIC\]](#)

Music for Centering

Coming Home

First Unitarian Church of Rochester, NY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbJ32h-YpQA>

or

Come, Come Whoever You Are

#188 Singing the Living Tradition

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmMp0OKHqTA>

Closing

In the rest of our time together and in the days ahead,

May we listen to our deepest selves [hands on heart].

May we be open to life's gifts [wide arms].

And may we be moved to serve needs greater than our own. [cupped hands]

Blessed be, Amen

Introduction to Summit Day

- Explain that Summit Day will be the meeting where we virtually “visit” a faith community of the religion we are exploring that month. Three things will make up this virtual visit:
 - Exploring that faith community’s website
 - Watching videos of that faith tradition’s worship and/or core spiritual practice
 - Interviewing a leader from that faith community or a person who practices that religion
- Since this month we are focusing on our own UU faith, explain that the group will get a taste of future Summit Days by visiting your church’s website and interviewing a long-time member of your congregation.

Session Activity #1 (15 min)

The Welcome of Our Website

Instructions

- Have the youth **pull up the church website** on their phones or on laptops.
- Have them imagine themselves as guests visiting the website for the first time. Encourage them to **imagine themselves as someone different from them**. A different age, ethnicity, social class, even religion.
- Ask them to search the site and find **one thing that would make them excited** about attending the church and checking it out. Consider making it into a race, with them sharing as soon as they find something.
- Ask them to search the site and find **one thing that would discourage them from attending the church and checking it out**. (Handle this with care and encourage them to do it in the spirit of trying to be more welcoming)
- Ask them to search the site and find **a sentence or phrase that best explains who Unitarian Universalists are or what we believe**.
- Consider sharing the major points about the website which the group has discovered, with someone who might take them into account and want to know.

Session Activity #3 (30 min)

Interview a Longtime Church Member

Seeing Our Church Through the Lens of Experience & Deep Commitment!

- Recruit a congregant who has been a church member or UU for many years. Invite them to your meeting.
- Have the youth interview them using the interview questions in Appendix #3.
- Consider having the interviewee ask the youth some questions. Here are some suggestions:
 - What do you miss most about church during COVID Quarantine?
 - What do you love most about being a UU?
 - How do you think UUism will change by the time you are my age?

Looking Ahead - What to do ahead of time or expect (3 min)

Thank the youth for their participation this week. Note one thing that you particularly appreciated or enjoyed about the session you just did with them.

Remind the youth what is happening next week and make sure they know what they have to do ahead of time. Note one thing that you are particularly looking forward to.

Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice (2 min)

Share Closing Words of your choosing. You can read the Lifelines closing words from the centering section. Or re-read *The Longing for Home, By Starhawk*. Our UU Hymnals also have a number of closing words. Here's another Lifelines-related Closing you can use as well:

*As we part,
Be yourself, even when others want you to hide and fit in.
Remember what is good, even when things aren't going your way.
And take care of those around you, knowing that none of us make it through our journeys alone.
Go in peace. Go with joy.
Amen.*

Extinguish the chalice.

Appendix #1

The Eight Practices of Welcoming

1. Be fully present
2. Be curious
3. Be open to being changed
4. Be comfortable with discomfort
5. Be an appreciative listener
6. Be light-hearted
7. Be gentle (allow and heal mistakes)
8. Be yourself

Appendix #2

Eight Practices and Token Suggestions

- 1. Be fully present** – a tiny wrapped “present” or an object that calls people to awareness, like a [chime](#), a [ringing bowl](#) or [wind chimes](#). a Hershey’s kiss.
- 2. Be curious** – Curious George figurine; a light bulb; a magnifying glass; an empty teacup, maybe from dollhouse (to go with “cup of tea” story), or a mysteriously flavored jellybean.
- 3. Be open to being changed** – a butterfly; a phoenix; some change (coins); a giant jawbreaker with multiple colors.
- 4. Be comfortable with discomfort** – a piece of sandpaper; a pincushion; a clothespin (with spring); an “annoying sounding” whistle; a packet of really sour candy or Pop Rocks candy.
- 5. Be an appreciative listener** – a rubber ear; a small [word stone](#) with the words “wonder” on it; a whistle pop.
- 6. Be light-hearted** – a [smiley face](#); a can of [play-doh](#); (remember this is fun and play not work); smiley face candy.
- 7. Be gentle (allow and heal mistakes)** – a tiny soft stuffed animal; cotton balls; cotton candy.
- 8. Be yourself** – the letter “U” as a block or stencil; a “bee”; a pocket mirror; a tea light; (“This little light of mine; I’m gonna let it shine”); Nerds candy.

Appendix #3

Interview Questions

Seeing Our Faith Through the Lens of Experience!

1. How has Unitarian Universalism enriched, healed or deepened your connection to your inner self, life's joy, or serving others?
2. What does the chalice and the flame symbolize to you?
3. What is your understanding of "the divine"?
4. Who is your favorite UU historical figure?
5. What is your favorite service or time of the church year? What feels like a "UU Holy Day" to you?
6. What is your favorite "spiritual" book, poem or quote?
7. Do you have a spiritual practice? How does the church support your practice?
8. What sound or taste do you most associate with our church?
9. What was your favorite thing about church or your religious home when you were a teenager? If you didn't attend a religious community as a teenager, what did you think about other teenagers who did?
10. What advice do you have for us as we get ready to visit all these other religions?

Appendix #4

Crossing Paths Multiple Choice Game Chart

Problem	Solution	Key Figure/Symbol	Answer
SEPARATION	CONNECTION	Flaming Chalice	Unitarian Universalism
EXILE	RETURN	Torah	Judaism
SIN	SALVATION	Jesus	Christianity
SUFFERING	NIRVANA (ENLIGHTENMENT)	Buddha	Buddhism
WANDERING (SAMSARA)	LIBERATION (MOKSHA)	Om	Hinduism
DISCONNECTION FROM ONE'S INNER LIGHT	STILLNESS	Cross	Quaker
PERSONAL SIN	BECOME BORN AGAIN	Jesus	Megachurch/Evangelical
SELF_SUFFICIENCY	SUBMISSION	Mohammed	Islam
SIN	SALVATION BY FAITH & WORKS	Crucifix	Catholicism
DISCONNECTION FROM NATURE	HARMONY WITH NATURE AND NATURAL CYCLES	Wheel of the Year	Pagan

Crossing Paths Authors

Katie Covey, Soul Matters Director of Religious Education

Rev. Scott Tayler, Soul Matters Team Lead



© 2020-21 Soul Matters ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Packets are for use by congregations who have purchased from Soul Matters.

Learn how to purchase our resources and join at <http://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com>

Follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>