



Soul Matters

Opening to Joy



RE Resources
Second to Fifth Grade

December 2021

Contents

WELCOME TO OPENING TO JOY	2
CALENDAR CONNECTIONS	3
LESSON A: CREATING JOY	4
LESSON B: SHARING JOY	8
LESSON C: FINDING JOY IN TOUGH TIMES	13
LESSON D: THE JOY OF US	17
OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADER SUPPORT	23

Welcome to Opening to Joy

Welcome to the Soul Matters Multi-Platform Packet for Second through Fifth Grades for the month of December. This year our monthly themes invite us to think about not only what values our UU faith calls us to but also the key actions and skills that our times require of us. Pandemic time exposes the need for humanity to change and adjust in key ways. So each month we will explore a different skill that we need to develop or lean into so that we don't just return to normal but actually bring about a "new normal."

This month we explore the ways in which our times call us to "Open to Joy." There are four ways we will tease apart the idea of opening to joy with our children. Here they are:

Lesson A: Creating Joy - On the work of whimsy.

Lesson B: Sharing Joy - On the work of generosity.

Lesson C: Finding Joy (in Tough Times) - On the work of redirecting our gaze.

Lesson D: The Joy of Us - On the work of creating home/being together.

I am particularly excited about the idea of Finding Joy (in Tough Times.) During the brainstorm lab in September on Opening to Joy, we found ourselves first in grief and frustration at the return of high COVID numbers and the cancellation of many plans for opening in person. There was a sense of gloom. Next, we reminded ourselves that we could still be open to joy, even in the tough times, providing the lens for this session. We started pivoting in our awareness of who and where we were, members of a resilient faith community. Then, our gloom turned to giggles as we described the simple, and even silly, joyful things that were a part of our lives now - a striped shirt, a weekly card game. In the end, we were wiping away tears of hilarity as joy overtook us and we laughed our way across the Zoom screen making puns and suggesting outlandish ideas for the Winter Holidays. It was an escape and a boost, giving all of us a smile that opened a space of joy as we moved forward into our day.

I wish similar moments of whimsy, smiles and joy connection for you. We may not have traditions back, or any type of normal or new normal. But may we find giggles and smiles along the way as we navigate the resilient paths of joy during these tough times.

Katie, on behalf of the [entire Soul Matters Team](#)
DRE for Soul Matters, soulmattersre@gmail.com

PS. If you would like to read or review our overall approach to the 21-22 RE Packets, check out our ["Welcome to Soul Matters RE" Google Doc](#).

Legend:

1. *Purple Font* = online adaptations and alternatives
2. *Double asterisks ("**")* = books recommended by the Widening the Circle Research Team

Calendar Connections

December 2021

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

Interfaith:

- [Advent](#) (Christian) Nov. 28 -Dec. 24, 2021 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Bodhi Day](#) (Buddha's Enlightenment) - [Dec. 8](#) (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Chalica](#) (UU) Dec. 3 - Dec. 9 (more [here](#))
- [Hanukkah](#) (Jewish) - Nov.28 -Dec. 6, 2021 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Yule](#), Solstice (Pagan/Wiccan) - Dec. 21
- Christmas Eve - Dec. 24, 2021 (Friday)
- Christmas Day - Dec. 25, 2021 (Saturday)
- [Holy Innocents Day](#) (Christian) - Dec. 28
- [Watch Night](#)/Freedom's Eve (Christian) - Dec. 31
- [Kwanzaa](#) - Dec. 26 - Jan. 1 (more [here](#) and [here](#))

National & Cultural:

- [Seasonal Depression](#) Awareness Month
- [World AIDS Day](#) - Dec. 1 (more [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Rosa Parks](#) Arrested - Dec. 1 (1955)
- International Day of [Persons with Disabilities](#) - Dec. 3
- [Human Rights Day](#) - Dec 10th
- Anniversary of [Sandy Hook](#) Shootings - Dec 14
- [Montgomery's buses](#) are desegregated - Dec. 21 (1956)
- [Boxing Day](#) (Canada) Dec. 26 (more [here](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe:

- [Nobel Prize](#) Day - Dec 10
- How [the Grinch](#) Stole Christmas shown for first time - Dec 18, 1966
- [Festivus](#) for [the rest of us](#) – Dec 23

Lesson A: Creating Joy On the Work of Whimsy (Core Story: Your Name is a Song**)

Theme Angle

Our theme this month is Opening to Joy. One of the ways we UUs open to joy is to find our funny bones. We create joy by celebrating the power of silly and the work of whimsy. So let's create some joy by letting whimsy guide our way!

Light It!

We know that everyone approaches chalice lighting differently. Some use the same chalice lighting words for the entire month, while others pick a new one each week and tailor it to that week's particular theme connection. So instead of offering specific chalice lightings for you to use, we offer four "places" for you to find the chalice lighting that fits your approach:

- *Worship Web:* <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting>
- [Tapestry of Faith and other common Chalice Lightings for Children](#)
- *Our monthly Soul Matters worship packets*
- *Your own congregation's special chalice lighting words*

Extinguish It!

Signal the end of "sacred time" or "Chalice time" with a short ritual for extinguishing the chalice. It might be just after any of the below sections or at the end of the session. Use a [candle snuffer](#) if you use real candles for dramatic effect, or just blow it out. Here are some resources for you to find the chalice extinguishing words that fits your approach:

- *UUA:* <https://www.uua.org/genre/chalice-extinguishing>
- *Worship Web:* <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/closing/6049.shtml>
- *Katie's Words*

*We gather the warmth of love, the light of truth, and the energy of action into our hearts.
Back into the world of do and say,
Carry it forward into the dawning day.
Go Now in Peace, Amen.*

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

Introduce It!

(Wonder Box)

Finding our Funny Bone

Reflection Object: a bone

Suggested Script

“Here is a bone. I wonder what kind of bone it is? Have you ever heard of the name of a bone that isn’t in your body? It’s called our “funny bone.” [Use this [source](#) / quote to describe a funny bone in your own words]:

“Have you ever hit the inside of your elbow in just the right spot and felt a tingling or prickly kind of dull pain? That's your funny bone! It doesn't really hurt as much as it feels weird. The "funny bone" got its nickname because of that funny feeling you get after you hit it.

But your funny bone isn't actually a bone at all. Running down the inside part of your elbow is a nerve called the ulnar nerve. The ulnar nerve lets your brain know about feelings in your fourth and fifth fingers. It's also one of the nerves that controls some movement of your hand... People sometimes mention the funny bone when they talk about their sense of humor. Maybe you've heard someone say that something "really tickled my funny bone." We'll leave you with a joke and hope that it tickles yours:

What's a bone in your body that you can never break? Your funny bone!”

This is also a great way to think about our monthly theme: Opening to Joy. One of the ways we UUs open to joy is to find our funny bones. We create joy by celebrating the power of the silly and the work of whimsy [*note: consider explaining what whimsy means to the children*].

So today we’re going to explore a bunch of ways in which we can create joy through silliness and fun. Are you ready?! Let’s begin!”

Special Guest Strategy: Who in your congregation is known for their sense of humor, or magic tricks, balloon sculpting or even a collection of whimsical things. Invite them to share how they create joy.

Tell It and Talk About It!

(Story)

Suggested Introductory Words

“A great way to explore finding joy through playfulness and silliness is by sharing this book [**hold it up**]. In this story, a girl is upset because no one at school could say her name correctly. In response, her mother doesn’t get mad but instead playfully uses singing to brighten her daughter's spirit and help her find a great way to handle the situation. It’s a great reminder about honoring the beauty and opening to the joy of everyone’s names.”

Your Name is a Song** by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow

Book: [HERE](#)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RETE1eKpUpw>

Reflection Prompts

- What was your favorite part of the book?
- What was your favorite name in the book?
- If someone had trouble pronouncing your name, what song would you teach them?
- What did you think about the conversation between the little girl and her mom?
- Where does your name come from? The throat, the heart, the sky, or somewhere else?
- Share a time when you had troubles with your name or someone else's.

Notes on the Book

**ARAOMC Context from the Widening the Circle Research Team

The WTC team chose this book because of its appropriateness for the theme of Opening to Joy.

Everyone has the right to insist on having their name pronounced correctly. Everyone can learn to pronounce names that are new to them. All names are beautiful. The author approaches the importance of learning to say names in a way that creates joy.

There is a glossary in the back of the book that discusses the meanings and origins of the names that appear in the story. This book also opens the door for discussions on the importance of listening to what someone wants to be called and how they pronounce their name.

Online Permission Note

Innovation Press has authorized its books for online use as long as you follow their specific use guidelines found [HERE](#).

Explore It!

(Group Activities and Experiential Learning)

Here are a variety of suggestions for digging deeper into the theme. Choose the one(s) just right for your group! In many cases, these will work as well online as in-person. When an activity doesn't work for both in person and online, we offer an online adaptation or alternative and **highlight it in purple**.

Explore It with a Craft

Create joy by creating some crazy slime!

Fluffy Silly Slime

<https://www.thebestideasforkids.com/fluffy-slime-recipe/>

Explore It with Games

Children are experts at silliness. Try these games to create joy.

- Syllable Name Clap - from the [UUA's Deep Fun Collection](#)
- Choose from this [variety of whimsical activities](#), like homemade Mad Libs and Balloon Tennis.

Sometimes Zoom meetings start with nervous or serious faces. Create some silliness and joy by inviting children to play around with their on-screen image.

- **Silly Zoom Hats, Names and Faces**
 - Use the [Zoom Video Filters and Studio Effects](#) to create silly mustaches, lips, hats and surroundings. Change your screen name to a silly name.
- **Silly Things Treasure Hunt**
 - What silly things are around your home? Find it and share it on screen.

Explore It with Joke Sharing

Invite the children to share their favorite Knock, Knock jokes and other jokes.

Prime the pump at the beginning or intersperse among the children's favorites, check out

<https://www.fatherly.com/play/funniest-knock-knock-jokes-kids/>

Explore It with a Discussion about the Book

Reflection questions, a name pronunciation video by the author, activities and more

<https://www.readingisresistance.com/post/your-name-is-a-song-by-jamilah-thomkins-bigelow>

Explore It with an Interview

Congregational Visitor

In the spirit of the joy of multigenerational relationships, invite a person who is known for their sense of humor, puppeteering, collection of magic tricks, balloon sculpture or a whimsical collection of robots, aliens or stuffed animals. Invite them to share with the children.

Lesson B:

Sharing Joy

On the work of generosity (Core Story: The Word Collector**)

Theme Angle

Many of us know the song and lyric, “Love is something if you give it away... you end up having more!”. This month we can also say Joy is something if you give it away, you end up having more. The theme this month is Opening to Joy, and today we talk about sharing joy and the work of generosity. Just like the song says, if you give it away, you end up having more. Generosity gives us the gift of a warm heart and a sense of wholeness. In fact, we can never be really joyful and happy unless we are generous. So when it comes to opening to joy, our faith clearly tells us, “Generosity makes us whole.”

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

Introduce It!

(Wonder Box)

Sharing Joy with Generosity

Reflection Object: A Penny

Suggested Script

“Here is a penny. A Unitarian woman named Malvina Reynolds wrote a song called Magic Penny. Here it is. [Sing it or play the video [Magic Penny](#).] Love is something if you give it away... you end up having more. This month we can also say Joy is something if you give it away... you end up having more. The theme this month is Opening to Joy, and today we are talking about sharing joy and the work of generosity.

Just like the song says, if you give it away, you end up having more. Generosity gives us the gift of a warm heart and a sense of wholeness. In fact, we can never be really joyful and happy unless we are generous.

And on top of that, when we are generous, we don't just end up giving others more stuff - we end up giving them more joy! Just think how you feel when your friend shares their lunch with you, or bike with you, or even treats you to an ice cream cone. You light up! You feel good! Not just because you have something you didn't before, but also because it makes you feel more connected to your friends. And that's such a happy thing!

So today we're going to explore a bunch of ways that sharing leads to more joy, for others and ourselves! Are you ready?! Let's begin!”

Special Guest Strategy

Who in your congregation has been a giver, of money, of time, of talent? Invite them to share how the joy of sharing has given them a sense of wholeness.

Tell It and Talk About It!

(Story)

Suggested Introductory Words

“Today’s story is a great way to explore how sharing and being generous creates more joy in the world and for ourselves. In the story, we meet Jerome. He loves collecting all kinds of words. It makes him happy. But we also learn that what makes him even happier is taking the words he collects and sharing them with others. Let’s listen to the story together!”

The Word Collector** by Peter H. Reynolds

Read aloud with Michelle and Barack Obama: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJ_MUs_MCkg

Book: [HERE](#)

Reflection Prompts

- What was your favorite part of the story?
- How did you feel when he started writing poetry with his words?
- What awesome words would you collect?
- What things have you collected?
- Have you ever given away your collection to other children? Or have you thought about what it would be like to share it with others?
- Do you feel happy and joyful when people share things with you? Why do you think receiving gifts and generosity makes us feel so happy?

Notes on the Book

****ARAOMC Context from the Widening the Circle Research Team**

The WTC team chose this book because of its appropriateness for the theme of Opening to Joy. The main character is a Person of Color. The main character is an intellectual/creative/nerd. Words are important/words are creative. Word choice is important. Words can cause harm. Words can create joy.

Online Permission Note

Scholastic Book Publishers, which owns Orchard Books, has authorized its books for online use as long as you follow their specific use guidelines found [HERE](#). Just scroll down the section titled “Scholastic Books.”

Explore It!

(Small Group Activities and Experiential Learning)

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Explore It with Generosity Cards

Share joy by creating a winter holiday card and giving it to someone who could use a thoughtful uplifting message. These cards could be used to go with the generous gifts from the Mitten Tree, below.

Explore It with Seasonal BINGO cards

April Rosario, WTC team member, uses homemade [BINGO cards](#) during multigen services. When someone hears or sees a word on the BINGO CARD that is part of the service, they cross it off on their card. When they make a row, they call out BINGO! (Yes, even during the sermon) and a service leader brings them an award. What about doing this with words about generosity, winter holidays, song titles and words in the sermon?

The site also offers [virtual BINGO cards!](#)

Explore It with Mirror and Radial Symmetry Word Art Cards

Fold a piece of drawing paper in half. Write a word with tempera paint down the crease, staying on one side of the paper. Fold the paper to "print" the word on the other side of the paper, creating an abstract design. Words to suggest are Joy, Sharing, Opening, Love.

Or use this instructional video to create art with words appropriate to the session, like Joy, Sharing, Love: [How to Create Radial Symmetry Using your NAME](#)

- Consider using these art pieces as cards to include with the mittens, hats, scarves and socks from the Mitten Tree.

Explore It with a Song

From You I Receive, To You I Give by Joseph And Rabbi Nathan Segal

Sing this song together with hand motions, below or share the video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7a0Lei2OCA>

From you I receive (extend hands and cup them from "other" to your heart)

To you I give (touch your heart, then extend hands, cupped to "other")

Together we share (grasp hands of those next to you, or grasp your own hands together)

And by this we live. (place hands on heart)

Explore it with an Interview

Congregational Visitor (online or in person)

In the spirit of cultivating multigenerational relationships, invite someone who has served in a Soup Kitchen or participated in a Service Trip. Invite them to reflect about how sharing joy with others whose needs are greater than our own, creates joy in themselves.

Explore It with Paper Ornament Gift Making

Create Paper Crane, Dove and Chalice Snowflakes for others

Invite the children to make paper cranes, doves and/or Chalice snowflakes for a shut-in or someone who is missing family at this season. Write wishes and greetings on the snowflakes, cranes and doves.

Make an Origami Crane

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

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

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

For children who need an easier option: Dove Crafts

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

Fold Chalice Snowflakes:

From the UUA Worship Web

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/image/chalice-snowflake-instructions>

Explore It with a Mitten or Sock Tree Ritual

The powerful part of this activity is the sight of a bare tree on the table in front of the children at first. Then as the children hang their gifts of generosity (socks, mittens, scarves) the tree takes on a new shape, and becomes a symbol of generosity.

Suggested Script

"We are going to make a Mitten/Sock Tree. A Mitten/Sock Tree is a way to share joy with those whose needs are greater than our own. When we lean into sharing joy with others, we create joy in ourselves and joy for others. Especially during our month of opening to joy, the tree gives us a way to share joy at this season of giving.

Details: How to do it & Tips

Setting Things Up: For a larger group, use a Christmas Tree large enough to hold all the gifts on its branches. Save a colorful hat for the top! For a smaller group, use a smaller Christmas tree and place it on a table.

Play [The Waltz of the Flowers from the Nutcracker](#) or [Rockin Around the Christmas Tree](#) in the background as the children one by one place their gift of generosity on the tree.

Ritual Process: Finish with a short blessing:

We share our joy with others
in the form of hats and mittens.

We remember the words of a [leader](#) about how to live:

"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."

Amen, Blessed be.

Note: Many congregations make the Mitten or Sock Tree a multigenerational celebration during a Worship Service. Check out the [Soul Matters Mitten or Sock Tree Google Doc](#) for more details for a multigenerational celebration as well as suggestions for a [Drive Thru Mitten Tree](#).

Lesson C:

Finding Joy in Tough Times

On the work of redirecting our gaze

(Core Story: The Tiger and the Strawberry)

Theme Angle

The theme this month is Opening to Joy. In this session, we explore changing our perspective, redirecting our gaze to find joy, even in tough times. Do we see a glass half empty or half full? If we redirect our gaze from the emptiness, we can see the fullness.

We can look at the winter solstice in the same way: it is the darkest day of the year, and it is the return of the light. Viewing it through a positive lens shifts it from a time of depletion to a time of joy!

This is especially important in our time of COVID, climate change, and racism. In order to take on these challenges, we must be able to keep hope and joy in our sights. That's where the strength will come to bring change.

Light It!

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Introduce It

(Wonder Box)

Half Full or Half Empty?

Reflection Object: a glass of water half full

Suggested Script:

“Here is a glass of water. I’ll pour some water in (pour it in halfway.) So how many of you think the glass is half empty? How many of you think it’s half full? Guess what, you are both correct. It’s just a matter of perspective.

The theme this month is Opening to Joy. In this session, we explore changing our perspective, redirecting our gaze to find joy, even in tough times. Do we see a glass half empty or half full? If we redirect our gaze from the emptiness, we can see the fullness.

We can look at the winter solstice in the same way: it is the darkest day of the year, and it is the return of the light. Viewing it through a positive lens shifts it from a time of emptiness to a time of joy!

This is especially important in our time of COVID, climate change, and racism. In order to take on these challenges, we must be able to keep hope and joy in our sights. That’s where the strength will come to bring change.

So today we’re going to explore what happens when we open to joy and redirect our gaze. Are you ready?! Let’s begin!”

Tell It and Talk About It (Story)

The Strawberry, a Zen koan (story)

Suggested Introductory Words

“Here’s a story and song by Lea that tells a favorite wisdom tale from the Zen Buddhist tradition. In Lea’s version she reminds us that love is free, peace is free, and joy is free and can be found even in troubled times, if we control our gaze. Here we go.”

The Strawberry

Original Zen koan found [HERE](#)

Lea Morris’ Story and Song version:

- Preview the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7f9V3zuspXM>
- Purchase at <https://www.hopesingseternal.me/stories>

Reflection Prompts

- How did you feel when the woman was surrounded by not one but two tigers?
- What part of the story do you remember the most?
- What did you like about the story/song?
- What didn’t you like about the story?
- What do you think this story teaches us?
- Have you ever been in a sad or challenging situation but were still able to notice and find joy?

More about our video story and song project with Lea Morris...

The Soul Matters Team is thrilled about this year’s creative collaboration with Lea Morris. Each month Lea tells one of our selected & theme-based wisdom tales and then shares a reflection & song inspired by that story. It’s a beautiful blending of her wonderful story-telling skills, luminous songwriting and joy-filled singing.

As with all ten of the videos Lea is creating, the purchase price per video is \$20.

With your purchase comes the following usage rights:

- *Playing the video in online and in-person worship services (including recorded services)*
- *Playing the video in online and in-person children’s religious education programs/presentations (including ones that are recorded and posted online)*
- *Sending out a link to the video to parents so they can watch it with their children at home as part of their family spiritual life activities*

Purchase all ten at a lower price: Follow this link to purchase all ten of Lea’s story/song videos on all ten of our Soul Matters themes at: <https://www.hopesingseternal.me/stories/alltenstorysongs>

Explore It

(Small Group Activities and Experiential Learning)

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Explore It with an Emotions Wheel

The story teaches us to view our emotions with perspective. It helps to notice the emotions we are experiencing. Use this wheel to identify emotions.

<https://www.adventure-in-a-box.com/free-printable-mood-emotion-wheel-chart-for-children>

Explore It by Eating a Strawberry (or Raisin) Mindfully

The classic practice involves eating a raisin mindfully, experiencing each moment. Find it [HERE](#). Change the object of mindful eating to a strawberry, if you wish.

Explore It with a Solstice Shadow play

The shorter, darker days of winter bring a special time: the opportunity to turn inward and explore the shadows inside us. The darkness can transform from scary threat to sacred mystery. Invite the children to engage in shadow play and explore the darkness.

Create shadow puppet silhouettes and act out The Strawberry Koan behind a sheet using a flashlight.

Explore It with Games

Open to joy and play these popular games with a shadow component.

Play Shadow Simon Says and Follow the Leader

- from <https://www.thecompassschool.com/blog/light-shadow-play/>

Simply play the classic games but do it while casting shadows with your hands. All of the hands must follow the rules of whichever game you are playing.

Lesson D:

The Joy of Us

On the work of being together

(Core Story: Ode to Joy Flash Mob)

Theme Angle

Opening to joy at the end of the holiday season means celebrating being together, with family, with community. How do we do the work of being together? By curiosity, by gentleness, and kindness towards each other. We lean in to explore a feeling of “home” by sharing, eating, and building together. And there is arguably no greater joy than that joy we find when we are “home”!

Note: Since this session could be used at the end of the month, right after Christmas Day, we have created it so it could be a simple multigenerational gathering in person, or on Zoom, together to make Gingerbread Houses, or it could be a time with children. Celebrate opening to joy with a reminder of the “joy of us.”

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- *Your own congregation’s special chalice lighting words*

Extinguish It!

Signal the end of “sacred time” or “Chalice time” with a short ritual for extinguishing the chalice. It might be just after any of the below sections or at the end of the session. Use a [candle snuffer](#) if you use real candles for dramatic effect, or just blow it out. Here are some resources for you to find the chalice extinguishing words that fits your approach:

- *UUA:* <https://www.uua.org/genre/chalice-extinguishing>
- *Worship Web:* <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/closing/6049.shtml>
- *Katie’s Words*

*We gather the warmth of love, the light of truth, and the energy of action into our hearts
Back into the world of do and say
Carry it forward into the dawning day.
Go Now in Peace, Amen.*

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

Introduce It!

(Wonder Box)

Resonating Together

Reflection Object: [Ode to joy music box](#) or other [hand crank music box](#) or [HERE](#)

Suggested Script

“Here is a hand crank music box. When I hold it up and crank it, it has a very quiet sound. You can hardly hear it. But when I put it on a hard surface, listen! It reverberates with the tune! [The tune greatly echoes! For a demonstration video, check this [Music Box Wonder Box MP4](#).]

Just as the music box resonates when placed on a table, we too resonate when we are around people who are special to us. It might be our family; it might be our congregation. So today, we’re going to explore how being together opens us to joy. Are you ready?! Let’s begin!”

Tell It and Talk About It!

(Story: Ode to Joy)

Ode to Joy

Suggested Introductory Words

“Here’s a video about how one little girl dropped a coin in an instrument case and began a street concert flash mob with some of the most moving, joyful music ever created. The people on the street gather as musicians and chorus slowly join each instrument. By the end, there are all kinds and ages of people enjoying the music written by Beethoven and creating community together, or to put it another way, a sense of home together!

As we view the video, watch carefully how the musical experience is created together.
Here we go.”

Video: Flash Mob Ode to Joy - Beethoven Symphony No.9 (5:40 min)

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

Reflection Prompts

- What part of the video will you remember most?
- How did you feel when just a few musicians came out? When the whole orchestra appeared?
- What have you heard about Beethoven?
- How have you created a surprise with other people?
- What would you do if a flash mob started where you were?
- How did the music make you feel?

Explore It!

(Small Group Activities and Experiential Learning)

Here are a variety of suggestions for digging deeper into the theme. Choose the one(s) just right for your group! In many cases, these will work as well online as in-person. When a more involved online adaptation or alternative is needed, we highlight this in purple.

Explore It with a Group Reflection

Best moments Post Its: What gives you joy?

Invite the children and all to draw or write their most joyful moments, with their family, their congregation, and their friends on Post It notes. Invite everyone to place them on a poster so they can be read and shared.

Explore it with Gingerbread Houses

Create these super simple graham cracker gingerbread houses individually or together in small groups.

<https://ourbestbites.com/easy-graham-cracker-gingerbread-houses/>

Then take a tour of the “Joy of Us Village” you have created.

This can be adapted for online by asking families to gather the ingredients and making the houses together on screen, then sharing the final product.

Explore It with a Zoom Candlelight Ceremony

Create a silent joyful time together with music such as “Silent Night” by music box

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaWhso9iesU> and every family lighting a candle and sharing it on Zoom in stillness for the 3 minutes of the music box playing.

Explore It with a Stuffie Pageant

Stuffie Christmas Pageant

Invite stuffed animals to offer the Christmas Pageant this year! Take pictures of the stuffies as they illustrate the traditional story then share them in a Zoom or on Social Media.

- Jesus as a baby doll in the manger with Mary in a blue cape and Joseph in a brown cape
- dress up stuffies like angels with tinsel headbands
- keep watch over the sheep (and other stuffies) with burlap or brown headbands
- bring gifts as wise stuffies with ribbon headbands in gold and silver

Children’s Chapel & Time for All Ages Suggestions

Below is a list of picture books, tellable wisdom tales and activity based “message moments” to support your efforts beyond RE classes and groups, such as children’s chapel or Multigenerational times for all ages.

Knowing that some congregations will want to draw from the stories in the sessions above to ensure continuity between worship and RE classes, we first list this packet’s stories to make them all available in one glance.

We also know that some congregations like to have stories in children’s chapel and multigenerational worship that complement but are different from those shared in RE classes. So we’ve also listed some suggestions not found in the sessions above. We hope both lists support whichever approach you use!

From This RE Packet

Your Name is a Song** by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow

Book: [HERE](#)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RETE1eKpUpw>

Whimsical songs in each person’s name.

Online Permission Note

Innovation Press has authorized its books for online use as long as you follow their specific use guidelines found [HERE](#).

The Word Collector** by Peter H. Reynolds

Read aloud with Michelle and Barack Obama: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJ_MUs_MCkg

Book: [HERE](#)

Opening to joy with generosity.

Online Permission Note

Scholastic Book Publishers, which owns Orchard Books, has authorized its books for online use as long as you follow their specific use guidelines found [HERE](#). Just scroll down the section titled “Scholastic Books.”

The Strawberry

Original Zen koan found [HERE](#)

Lea Morris’ Story and Song version:

Preview the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7f9V3zuspXM>

Purchase at <https://www.hopesingseternal.me/stories/stories>

Pursued by 2 tigers, about to fall off a cliff, a woman sees a strawberry.

Mindfulness brings us perspective and joy, even in tough times.

Video: Flash Mob Ode to Joy - Beethoven Symphony No.9 (5:40 min)

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

Creating joy with a flash mob.

Additional Wisdom Tales & Message Moments

The Treasure as told by Rabbi Nachman

To find treasure and joy, one must travel to Tzaddik.

Hindu Creation Story as told by Rev. Gretchen Haley

The secret to happiness is put in the human heart.

Are You Searching in the Wrong Place as told by Osho

Searching for a needle outside when you have lost it inside.

The Rebirth of the Sun as told by Starhawk

Solstice story

Message Moment

Untried Wings (along with a video of an Eagle's Eye view)

Story from Tapestry of Faith, Spirit of Life

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/life/workshop8/untried-wings>

Video: Awe from an Eagle's Point of View

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EAgbW1u00M>

The joy of taking wing, our longing to fly.

Opportunities for Leader Support

Come share together

Online Zoom Labs, Join Us!

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

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 be Soul Matters Channel at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCe2pmT_ATh-pbkjF2m7rfOA

- **Wed. Oct.13, 2021, 1 p.m. ET for November's theme of Holding History**
- **Wed. Nov. 10, 2021, 1 p.m. ET for December's theme of Opening to Joy**

Brainstorming Labs

In our brainstorming labs, RE Leaders support Katie by sharing ideas for upcoming packets. 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.

- **Wed, Oct. 6, 2021, 1 p.m. ET Jan. theme of Living with Intention**
- **Wed. Nov. 3, 2021, 1 p.m. ET Feb. theme of Widening the Circle**

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.

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!

Soul Matters RE Packet Author & 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



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