



# In the Middle

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## The Path of Belonging



Junior High

September 2022

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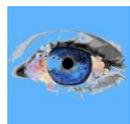
**Note about session structure:** Just a reminder that we encourage you to think of and use these packets as toolboxes, full of building blocks that will help you create the experiences that are right for your youth and your setting. These building blocks are designed holistically, with a whole-body approach, and with multiple intelligences in mind. Here are the whole-body categories with their symbols:



**Faith - Chalice Lighting**



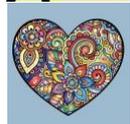
**Mind - First Thought Sharing & Issue Exploration**



**Imagination - Creative Projects**



**Body - Fun & Games**



**Heart - Storytelling & Personal Sharing**



**Soul - Active Meditation & Spiritual Practice**



**Interconnect Self - Justice & Faith-in-Action Engagement**

# Welcome to Belonging

Welcome to the Soul Matters *In the Middle* packet, designed for early youth, for the month of September.

The overarching question for our 2022-23 themes is, “What paths must we lean into and relearn as we travel together into our complex, challenging, and hoped-for future?” Each theme will lift up a particular spiritual path crucial to helping us birth a new normal worthy of our hopes.

This month, we’ll explore the path of *Belonging* in four distinct ways:

**Lesson A: Belonging and Water Communion: Exploring the Path of Community**

**Lesson B: Belonging and Not Belonging: Exploring the Path of Inclusion**

**Lesson C: Belonging and Yourself: Exploring the Path of the Real Me**

**Lesson D: Belonging and the Bigger Picture: Exploring the Path of the Connection to the Web of Life**

And before we go further, let me introduce myself. My name is April Rosario. I am the Director of Lifespan Faith Formation at First Parish Church in Taunton, a wife and mom of two, and I am so excited to be the newest member of the Soul Matters team. Writing curricula has become one of my most loved spiritual practices, and I am so happy to be able to share it with all of you as the developer of these middle school packets!

My hope is that this program will add to the theme-based ministry throughline for families and help create access for all to be exploring and wrestling with the same topic as they experience faith formation on Sunday mornings. *In the Middle* will hopefully help round out this faith formation experience, as the youngest to the oldest in families will be able to experience, explore and engage with the same theme and lens each week.

If I am being honest, this whole packet excites me, but I do have a few favorite bits. My absolute favorite is that it takes a whole-body approach to faith formation. My belief is that faith touches on every aspect of our lives and being. The building blocks in each lesson help support that idea and bring it to life. You can see the details of our holistic approach on the contents page.

I also love the symmetry of opening and closing the month with options that explore environmental justice in relationship to belonging. Lesson A holds up activities around water justice, and Lesson D holds up activities around food justice. This reflects our desire to bring a greater focus this year to the climate crisis that is upon us all.

I hope you and your youth enjoy and have as much fun participating in each of these lessons as I did writing them.

***April***

*April Rosario, Director of Early Youth Resources for Soul Matters*

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# Lesson A:

## Belonging and Water Communion

### Exploring the Path of Community

#### Theme Angle

Our theme this month is Belonging. In this lesson, we reflect on belonging to a community using the lens of a [Water Communion or Water Service](#). Each person or family member brings to the service a small amount of water from a place that is special and nourishing to them. During the appointed time in the service, people, one by one, pour their water together into a large bowl. As the water is added, the person who brought it tells why this water is special to them. The combined water is symbolic of our shared faith coming from many different sources. It is often then blessed by the congregation and sometimes is later boiled and used as the congregation's "holy water" in child dedication ceremonies and similar events. This ritual is a perfect fit for the theme of belonging. It captures how we belong to a UU community that honors a diversity of perspectives and experiences.

**Note:** Water Communion can be a showcase of privilege if it becomes a travelog of who has gone to the farthest and most exotic locations over the summer. Instead, use the communion to emphasize the spiritual importance of the water being shared, i.e., tap water from the first drink after the birth of a baby, a bit of water from a creek near Grandpa's house, water from a family heritage trip to Ireland. Some congregations are exploring water aid and water justice issues as part of the Water Communion.

#### Leader Background:

- Water Ceremony/Communion Resources from the UUA:  
<https://www.uua.org/international/engagement/worship/water-communion>
- Lifting Water Communion Above Privilege and Trivia by Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern  
<https://sermonsinstones.com/2013/06/13/lifting-water-communion-above-privilege-and-trivia/?fbclid=IwAR2U3gourekADmc5ozjJQeFarEO3RZ5AK5ERWMDJ0EJcBabaugRxmg2TWDg>

# Light It!

## Centering or Chalice Lighting Quotes



### The Spirit of Water

By [Katie Gelfand](#)

*We light this chalice as a symbol of reunion.*

*We reunite in this sanctuary to share the flow of our hearts with one another.*

*We gather together in ritual*

*to celebrate our fountains of joy*

*to hold each other through storms of grief*

*to guide one another through rapids of transformation*

*to rest together on ponds of stillness.*

*Together, we honor the spirit of water, its many forms, and its life-giving essence.*

## Getting Started

### First Thoughts Sharing and Theme Exploration



### First Thoughts Discussion Suggested Script

“This month’s theme is Belonging. Today we are exploring how belonging connects with community, especially as it shows up in our UU water communion ritual.

Water communion is a ritual that helps remind us that we are part of something and belong to something larger than ourselves. During water communion, we take the time to bring together water from many places and many people together. This ritual of sharing and mingling waters acts as a symbol for how we also come together from many places and backgrounds to become a community/ congregation/church called [congregation/church name.] [If this is your congregation’s practice: The combined water is used to bless people in weddings, child dedications, and other ways to represent the love and support of the community.]

With that as background, let’s dig in with some questions and sharing...”

- **Where is somewhere you feel like you belong?**
- **What do you think the point of this ritual is? Why do we, as Unitarian Universalists make a practice of doing it?**

# Justice and Faith in Action

## Connecting Self and The Larger World



### Water Justice Activities

*“Water is essential to life. It constitutes up to 65% of the human body and 90% of the structure of plants. No living being can survive without it. Despite this, many people’s access to clean water is threatened by pollution of rivers, bad economics, poor infrastructure, and costly management in cities. Millions of people including children die every year from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. Fortunately, there has been great progress made in the past decade regarding drinking sources and sanitation, whereby over 90% of the world’s population now has access to improved sources of drinking water. However, there is still much work to be done.*

*By learning more about the effect that climate change has on clean water, the more we can protect people’s health and even save lives. By adapting to the effects, we can learn to use water more efficiently to help reduce greenhouse gases.”*

*- [True Education Partnership](#)*

#### **Create a Water Diary**

*“Help students understand the importance of water by developing awareness of their own daily consumption.”*

<https://www.trueeducationpartnerships.com/schools/classroom-ideas-to-celebrate-world-water-day/>

#### **Create a Water Justice Pledge**

Unitarian Universalism is a lived faith, a faith that requires action. One of the actions we take is to work for justice. As a group, watch one or both of the videos below and then discuss what actions youth can take in as a group and or as individuals to save and protect our clean water and our waterways.

As a group, decide which ideas are doable in the next year and write them down to create a water justice pledge. Have youth sign the pledge.

Close this activity by asking the group to answer the question, “How does caring passionately about protecting water help us feel connected to the natural world?”

Water Justice Videos:

<https://www.vox.com/videos/22215860/why-the-american-west-is-fighting-for-water-protections>

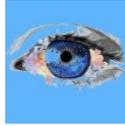
<https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2019/8/18/20803956/bangladesh-rivers-legal-personhood-rights-nature>

#### **An Interview with a Congregational Special Guest**

Invite someone in your congregation who has worked in water aid or water justice to share how they have felt while working and belonging to the world community.

# Express Yourself

## Creative Projects



### Decorate Reusable Water Bottle with DIY Stickers

**Materials:** Water bottles (ask youth to bring in reusable water bottles or purchase new ones), parchment paper, packing tape, toothpicks, printed images and/or fine tip permanent markers, and white paper

Youth can create their own stickers to personalize a reusable water bottle.

<https://www.kitchentableclassroom.com/how-to-make-stickers/>

# Fun and Games

## Games and Activities



### Buckets of Water Obstacle Course

#### Suggested Script

“Imagine going through your day without access to clean, safe water in your home for drinking, cooking, washing, or bathing whenever you need it.”

- What would be the most challenging part for you? What part of this would impact your life the most?

“According to a new report from UNICEF and the World Health Organization, 2.1 billion people around the world face that challenge every day. And the task of providing water for households falls disproportionately to women and girls, especially in rural areas....Collecting water takes time. Simply to get water for drinking, bathing, cooking, and other household needs, millions of women and girls spend hours every day traveling to water sources, waiting in line, and carrying heavy loads—often several times a day.” - <https://qz.com/1033799/women-still-carry-most-of-the-worlds-water/>

In order to help us understand and empathize with what this way of living might be like and the burden of having to carry your family's entire supply of clean water, we are going to do just that.

*This idea comes from Jean Cannella, member of Boulder Valley UU Fellowship, Lafayette, CO*

Invite youth to carry 2 five-gallon buckets of water through a simple obstacle course around the playground or other outdoor spot.

To add an extra layer divide the group in two and have them complete the challenge as an obstacle course.

### **Suggested Script for reflections**

You all just raced carrying 2 five gallons of water. That's almost 17 lbs! According to the World Health Organization, on average, a person uses [20-50 liters of water per day](#) for drinking, cooking, and washing. That is the equivalent of [44 and 110 pounds of water](#) daily for use by each household member.

- Can you imagine what your life would be like if that were part of your daily life and responsibilities?

### **Intergenerational Water Slide**

*Celebrate belonging to community with this intergenerational activity.*

If you are not in a drought, provide a [slip n slide](#) or rent one. Then invite the WHOLE CONGREGATION, including staff, to slide. (We announced the slide in advance so folks could bring a suit and towel if they wish. Our staff agreed that a shirt and leggings would be our uniform for sliding.)

Invite the children to slide early during the service time. Then the kids would move to the sanctuary to join in the Sharing of the Waters Ritual with their families. (In my former congregation, yes, the kids were wet, but nobody seemed to mind.) Finally, the whole congregation is invited to enjoy the water slide after the service.

#### **Leader Background:**

**For more information on water carrying, we invite leaders to read this article**

<https://qz.com/1033799/women-still-carry-most-of-the-worlds-water/>

## **Reflections & Group Discussions**

Storytelling & Personal Sharing



Read the below quotes to the group one at a time and begin a conversation around what they mean and what the group thinks about them.

- Water is life. (Ancient Proverb)
- Thousands have lived without love, not one without water. (W. H. Auden)
- When the well is dry, we learn the worth of water. (Benjamin Franklin)
- Whiskey is for drinking; water is for fighting over. (Mark Twain)

# Lesson B:

## Belonging and Not Belonging

### Exploring the Path of Inclusion

#### Theme Angle

The theme of the month is Belonging and Not Belonging. For this lesson, we reflect on how we want to be inclusive and expand our circles of belonging as UUs. We also reflect on how UUs have failed to walk the path of inclusion in the past by learning about the first Black Unitarian minister, Rev. Egbert Ethelred Brown, and his tortuous path to belonging to our UU community. May our community learn from the painful history of racism and make sure that people of color belong as our leaders, our ministers, and as part of our beloved community.

## Light It!

Centering or Chalice Lighting Quotes



#### Chalice Lighting Quote

*As we light this morning's chalice, may we remember these words from the Rev. Egbert Ethelred Brown  
"...May we know that without love there will never be peace. Teach us therefore to love. What does this  
world need more than love?"*

*- Rev. Egbert Ethelred Brown, Unitarian Minister, 1875-1956*

# Getting Started

## First Thoughts Sharing and Theme Exploration



### First Thoughts Discussion Suggested Script

“He drew a circle that shut me out-  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle and took him in!”  
— Edwin Markham

- What are your first thoughts about this quote? Do you like it, dislike it, agree or disagree with it, and why?

This quote reminds us of the importance of actively widening our circles as a way of living into our UU values and principles. If we look to our past, there are many examples of how as a faith, we have made the choice and taken the actions needed to widen our circles...

- We widened our circle to include a belief in a loving God who would help all people, [Rev. Hosea Ballou](#).
- We widened our circle to include the first Unitarian minister who was African American, [Rev. Ethelred Brown](#).
- We widened our circle to include the first Universalist woman minister - [Rev. Olympia Brown](#)
- We widened our circle to include the first Unitarian Universalist African-American & Latino Presidents - [Rev. Bill Sinkford](#) & [Rev. Peter Morales](#)
- We widened our circle to merge together two separate faiths - [Universalists and Unitarians](#).
- We widened our circle to include the first UU minister who was openly gay - [Rev. James Stoll](#)
- We widened our circle to include the first UU minister to serve a congregation who was openly transgender - [Rev. Sean Dennison](#)

Our theme this month is belonging, and we have all felt, at times, that we belong and don't belong. As we try to live out our UU faith, we want to remember how important it is to keep our circles wide and open.

Questions for sharing:

- What are some ways you are widening your circles right now?
- Who helped widen and open a circle to let you in?

# Spiritual Practice & Justice/Faith in Action

Active Meditation & Connecting Self and The Larger World



## Mindful/Effective Listening to a Story as a Meditation

### Suggested Introductory Words

This story illustrates the way a Black man had to persist to be able to belong in Unitarianism and become the first Black Unitarian minister. May our community learn from the painful history of racism and make sure that people of color belong as our leaders, our ministers, and as part of our beloved community.

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/journeys/session8/finding-your-way>

Explain to the group that you will be reading them a story. They will notice right away that it was written for a younger audience, but that is ok because it will aid what you are about to ask them to do. Hand each youth a pipe cleaner and explain that as you read the story [Finding Your Way Ethelred Brown](#) (from Tapestry of Faith's Faithful Journeys curriculum), their job is to practice mindful/effective listening. What are they listening for? Anything that they feel would make a person feel like they didn't belong.

Each time they hear something that they feel might close a person off, they should put a bend in their pipe cleaner.

At the end of the story, ask everyone to show their pipe cleaners and talk about how the story makes them feel.

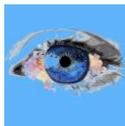
- How would you have reacted if you had to fight so hard to belong?
- When was a time when you felt or were told that you didn't belong?



**Leader Background:** Watch these excerpts from this sermon video so that you know more about the life story and hardships which Rev. Brown experienced. "He Persisted; the Story of Egbert Ethelred Brown" 2/6/2022 by Rev. Sherman Z. Logan Jr. of the First UU Church of Richmond, VA. Story from Min. 22:46 - 32:15/ 35:50 - 43:30.

# Express Yourself

## Creative Projects



### Inclusion and Exclusion Art

*Use these art projects to help youth reflect and explore how they feel when they find themselves in places/situations where they feel like they do belong and where they feel they don't belong.*

#### Coloring Circle Mandala

*To reflect on how we belong inside and outside circles, invite youth to color in some circle mandalas. While coloring, invite youth to discuss what it feels like to be on the inside and outside. Encourage them to use their choice of colors to represent the feelings/emotions they discuss.*

Mandala Coloring Pages: <https://www.google.com/search?q=circle+mandala+coloring+pages>

#### Inclusion and Exclusion Abstract Art

Invite you to create two abstract art paintings/drawings. One represents the feeling of being included, and the represents the feeling of being excluded.

Watch this video before creating for inspiration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9vxqbwjekM>

## Reflections & Group Discussions

### Storytelling & Personal Sharing



### 10 Things We Have In Common

One of the ways we can work to widen our circles, create a beloved community, and walk down the path of inclusion is to see the humanity in each other. To help youth recognize the common humanity we all share, regardless of apparent differences, play the “10 Things We Have in Common” game. Mix youth up randomly into groups of four to six and ask them to come up with a list of ten unexpected things they have in common. Set a short time limit and appoint a recorder who then shares their ten unexpected commonalities when all return to the large group.

# Fun and Games

## Games and Activities



*Feeling included is one of the most powerful feelings we as people can experience, especially in our teenage years. By participating in the games below, youth have a chance to experience, explore, celebrate and reflect on what it feels like to be included, connected, and an integral part of a group. In short, what it feels like to belong.*

### **Thread-The-Needle Hula Hoop Game**

Have youth stand in a circle and hold hands. Ask two of the youth to let go of one another's hands. Place the hula hoop between them. Have them reclip their hands through the middle of the hula hoop. Youth must pass the hula hoop around the circle without letting go of anyone else's hands. They will have to step through the hula hoop to "thread" it.

After it makes it around once, add a second hula hoop - the goal being not to let the second catch up to the first.

Finally, add a third hula hoop.

### **Human Knot**

Stand in a circle. Everyone puts their hands in the center and grabs hold of two different people's hands. Try to untangle the knot into one or two circles without letting go of one another's hands.

Variation1: Divide into teams and have a race - Variation 2: Try it in silence.

# Lesson C:

## Belonging and Yourself

### Exploring the Path of the Real Me

#### Theme Angle

The theme this month is Belonging. In this lesson, we explore the path of belonging to and honoring our unique selves. As UU's, we celebrate each of us as a unique and special person. By belonging to our special selves, we encourage and allow others to belong to their truest selves.

## Light It!

Centering or Chalice Lighting Quotes



#### Chalice Lighting Quote

*As we light this chalice, may the flame give us the energy to remember these words... "Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go who we think we are supposed to be and embracing who we are." ~Brené Brown*

## Getting Started

First Thoughts Sharing and Theme Exploration



#### First Thoughts Discussion Suggested Script

This month we have been exploring the theme of belonging. Today, we are reflecting on belonging to ourselves. Let's dig in with some first thoughts:

- What does it mean to you to belong to yourself?
- Describe a time/experience when you thought to yourself, "This is who I am!"
- If I held up a mirror right now and asked you to look at yourself, what do you think your first thought would be?
- Do you think what you see in the mirror represents all that you are?

We look in the mirror and see our outside, and we know we have an inside life, too. That inside makes us unique. Some would say it means understanding that each person has their own unique way of being in the world and their own gifts to bring to the world.

# Reflections & Group Discussions

## Storytelling & Personal Sharing



### Personal Sharing Prompts

- Do you think there is a difference between belonging and fitting in? If so, what do you think it is?

*Brené Brown is a sociologist or, in other words, a person who studies society, who has studied “Belonging,” and teaches about the difference between fitting in and belonging. She says fitting in means sacrificing or hiding part of who you are to conform.*

- Do you think this is true?
- Can you think of times when you sacrificed or hid a part of who you are to conform? (pretended you didn’t like something, made fun of someone to fit in, bought something all your friends have)

*Belonging means being accepted for ALL of who you are. It means the courage to stand alone and say, “This is who I am.”*

- Do you think this is easy or difficult for the majority of people and why?
- Is it easy or difficult for you?
- Can you think of a time when you felt accepted for ALL of who you are? At a Grandparents' house, at church, by friends?

## Spiritual Practice

### Active Meditation



### Teen Enneagram Project

*Meditation can come in many forms, but simply put, it is the practice of sharpening focus, attention, and connecting. Enneagram tests have been around for quite some time and can be a valuable and powerful tool to use to help understand personality, strengths, and challenges in life, as well as help us to examine how we relate to ourselves, others, and our world.*

Invite youth to get comfortable and hand out both the teen enneagram personality test and scoring sheets from [The Teen Enneagram Project](#). After explaining the process, turn on some meditation music and invite our youth to partake in this active meditation that will help them unlock a deeper insight into their unique selves.

Once the group is done, invite youth to share their results and talk about what surprised them, whether they find it accurate or not, and how knowing their enneagram personality types might help them as they travel down the path of exploring and living into their unique selves.

[Enneagram Teen Personality Test](#)

[Enneagram Scoring Sheet](#)

# Express Yourself & Justice/Faith in Action

Creative Projects & Connecting Self and The

Larger World



## Self-Portraits: [What is in a Self-Portrait? From Learning for Justice](https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/art-and-racial-justice-what-is-in-a-selfportrai)

“...a self-portrait tells us a great deal about artists’ self-concept, including how they see themselves in relation to society. Our self-image is important to our identities as activists! In this lesson, students will look at a few self-portraits of people of color and think about the role of art in struggles for racial justice.” <https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/art-and-racial-justice-what-is-in-a-selfportrai>

## Fun and Games

Games and Activities



### WOULD YOU RATHER...?

*Knowing what we like/don't like and what we would or would not rather is an excellent way of exploring our unique selves. Saying what you would rather do is another way of sharing what you “belong to” or what gives you a feeling of belonging.*

Place a line of tape down the center of the room. Ask the group to straddle the tape. When asked 'Would you rather...?' they have to jump to the left or right as indicated by the leader. Use these questions to get you started, and then let each youth come up with a question or two. Would you rather...?

- Visit the doctor or the dentist?
- Watch TV or listen to music?
- Own a lizard or a snake?
- Have a beach holiday or a mountain holiday?
- Eat only breakfast foods or dinner foods for the rest of your life?
- Be invisible or be able to read minds?
- Be hairy all over or completely bald?
- Be the most popular or the smartest person you know?
- Make headlines for saving somebody's life or winning a Nobel Prize?
- Go without television or fast food for the rest of your life?
- Always be cold or always be hot?
- Not hear or not see?
- Eliminate hunger and disease or be able to bring lasting world peace?
- Be stranded on a deserted island alone, or be left with someone you don't like?
- See the future or change the past?
- Be three inches taller or three inches shorter?

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# Lesson D:

## Belonging and the Bigger Picture

### Exploring the Path of Our Connection of the Web of Life

#### Theme Angle

Our theme this month is Belonging. This lesson reflects on how we belong to interdependent web of life. As UU's, our 7th Principle and our 6th Source remind us that we are interconnected with and belong to each other. Those principles also remind us that we belong to the universe and this beautiful blue ball called earth that floats within the universe. This is one of the most important paths we can travel: the path of remembering that we belong to the world around us rather than it "belonging" to us!

## Light It!

Centering or Chalice Lighting Quotes



#### For the Web of Life

By [Paul Sprecher](#)

*We light this chalice for the web of life which sustains us,  
For the sacred circle of life in which we have our being,  
For the Earth, the Sky, Above and Below, and  
For our Mother Earth, and for the Mystery.*

# Getting Started

## First Thoughts Sharing and Theme Exploration



### First Thoughts Discussion Questions

This month we have been reflecting on and exploring the theme of “belonging.” Today, we reflect on the interdependent web to which we belong.

- What does “interdependent” mean to you? (Depending on and belonging to each other and all things)
- What is the most important thing you depend on and belong to?

The 7th Unitarian Universalist principle says, “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

- Do you think we really belong to an interdependent web of all existence? Why or why not?
- Let’s take a piece of bread as an example. How are we interdependent with a piece of bread?

The bread is made with flour, the flour is made from wheat, grown in soil, when we die, our atoms return to the soil - and there we are - growing up into a wheat stalk! That is pretty interdependent.

- How about a Lego? How are we interdependent?

Legos are made of plastic, which comes from oil, which comes from decomposing dinosaurs and plants long ago, we are made of the same carbon, calcium, iron, oxygen and hydrogen as the dinosaurs, created during star formation. Our atoms have always existed in some form in the universe and so our atoms could have been part of the oil, which instead blended with rock and became soil, which grew a mushroom, which was eaten by a mammalian mouse and became part of the web of life which became part of you and me.

This deep and not-so-easily noticed interconnection is what we’re exploring today. Let’s dig in!

## Spiritual Practice

### Active Meditation



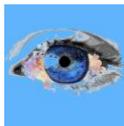
### Rainstorm Meditation

*Weather can have a tremendous impact on our moods and physical beings, thus reminding us just how deeply we are connected to the world around us. While this activity is often thought of as a drama game, it also works wonderfully as an active meditation practice. Those who participate will use their physical selves to embody and connect with a rainstorm.*

**Create a Rainstorm:** <https://bbbpress.com/2013/05/rain-storm/>

# Express Yourself

## Creative Projects



### Recycled Art Show

*We are interconnected with the material things around us that we use on a daily basis. They serve a purpose, but often when we are done with them, they get thrown out. This activity lets youth connect in a second way with the material things in their lives and give them new meaning and purpose. The goal is to remind youth that nothing is really “junk” i.e. something that can be separated from us and tossed away without any impact on us. Recycling is a way of remembering that when we throw things away, we are often throwing away a piece of our health.*

- Collect a bunch of junk, either yourself or by asking the youth to bring it in.
- Examples include empty cans, broken toy/appliances, boxes, empty toilet paper/paper towel tubes, fabric scraps, magazines, sea shells, etc.
- Also gather art supplies such as paper, scissors, glue, tape, markers, paint, wire or string to link items together and a few hammers and screwdrivers.

Then, when you play, assemble the kids in groups. Give them time to create their own art piece. Once everyone has finished, have an art show and let youth present their art to each other or to the whole congregation during coffee hour.

Here are some videos to show your youth to inspire their work!

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1TLFNRm1hc>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFalljRkpKQ>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNjAwPdsDWw>

## Fun and Games

### Games and Activities



### A Yarn Interconnected Web

Materials: A large ball of yarn and scissors.

“Have the group stand in a circle. The person holding the ball of yarn begins by choosing someone across the circle to affirm. They say something nice about someone else and throw the ball, while holding on to the end of the yarn. That person catches it and chooses a new person. The process continues until everyone is holding onto part of the web. Have the group raise the web above their heads to see how neat it is. Pass around scissors so that everyone can cut a piece of the web to keep as a memento of the community or find a place to hang up the web.”

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

*Variation suggested by Katy Carpmann: If you have trees or some type of open space with natural elements, create a web of yarn around the trees and other natural elements.*

# Justice and Faith in Action

Connecting Self and The Larger World



## Solar Ovens

*Using a solar cooker instead of electric appliances is a way to avoid unsustainable energy consumption and to model caring for the Earth. In fact according to Solar Cooking International 3 in 7 people today lack modern fuel to cook. Solar cooking is often simply a practical everyday reality for people who don't have electricity but live in a climate with an abundance of sun.*

### Make a Solar Oven

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/wonder/session13/276821.shtml>

### Background Information:

Leaders may learn more about the environment and social justice component of solar cooking here on the [Solar Cookers International](#) website.

# Movie Night

## Community Building and Bonding



A **youth movie** event is a great way to encourage teens to bond as a community, have fun at church, and dive a bit more into the theme they have spent/will spend/are spending the month exploring.

Here are a few tips for how to make your movie night a success.

### **Offer dinner and/or snacks (\*be sure to check in about allergies/food needs first)**

- Popcorn or chips are movie event staples, but you can add more fun to the mix with out-of-the-box options.
- If you decide on a specific theme, it's easy choosing foods to fit your specific topic.
- For more customized options, consider setting up a candy bar or DIY trail mix bar.
- Make it a potluck and have everyone bring their own favorite treats to share.

**Combine it with a lock-in:** An evening full of games, tons of pizza, and hanging out with friends is exactly the type of thing teens love. Make an impact on their night by showing a movie that shares the message of the Gospel! Showing the film early in the evening before everyone gets tired gives them something to talk about into the wee hours!

**Connect it back to the theme:** Once your movie is over, invite youth into a follow-up group that ties it back to the theme of the month.

## **Suggested Movie for the theme of Belonging:**

### **Wonder (PG)**

*Born with facial differences that, up until now, have prevented him from going to a mainstream school, Auggie Pullman becomes the most unlikely of heroes when he enters the local fifth grade. As his family, his new classmates, and the larger community all struggle to discover their compassion and acceptance, Auggie's extraordinary journey will unite them and prove you can't blend in when you were born to stand out.*

#### **Discussion Questions:**

<https://katebowler.com/resources/discussion-questions-for-wonder-by-rj-palacio/>

### **Spider-Man No Way Home (PG-13)**

*With Spider-Man's identity now revealed, our friendly neighborhood web-slinger is unmasked and no longer able to separate his normal life as Peter Parker from the high stakes of being a superhero. When Peter asks for help from Doctor Strange, the stakes become even more dangerous, forcing him to discover what it truly means to be Spider-Man.*

**Movie Discussion Questions:** <https://transfiguringadoption.com/spider-man-no-way-home-2021-discussion-guide/>

# 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](#).

# ***Soul Matters RE Packet Author & Support Team***

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