



LOVE WILL GUIDE US A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children

SESSION 1: LOVE IS LIKE A SEED

BY REV. ALICE ANACHEKA-NASEMANN AND CATHY CARTWRIGHT

© Copyright 2010 Unitarian Universalist Association.
Published to the Web on 11/21/2013 4:53:48 PM PST.
This program and additional resources are available on the UUA.org web site at
www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith.

SESSION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Love is the vital essence that pervades and permeates, from the center to the circumference, the graduating circles of all thought and action. Love is the talisman of human weal and woe—the open sesame to every soul. — Elizabeth Cady Stanton, women's civil rights activist in a speech given in 1860

This session introduces love as an unseen, guiding force unfolding in the universe, and introduces the Sources of our Unitarian Universalist faith, with an emphasis on love.

The story, "The Everything Seed," describes the origins of the universe as a single seed which contained within itself everything our universe needed, including love. Together participants ponder how love emerged, unfolded, and calls to people of faith.

Finally, this session establishes routines, rituals, and expectations for the program; and the group creates a behavior covenant together.

Several activities in this session require seeds. You will need a large seed such as an avocado pit or acorn for Activity 1, Pass the Seed Name Game and Activity 3, Story —

The Everything Seed. The children use seeds in an art project in Activity 4, Universe Seed Art. They will need seeds to plant if you do the Faith in Action activity, Creating a Love Will Guide Us Garden, or Alternate Activity 2, Planting Mystery Seeds.

GOALS

This session will:

- Introduce the themes, rituals, and format of Love Will Guide Us
- Introduce the seven Sources of Unitarian Universalist faith in simple language
- Explore love as an unfolding, guiding force in Unitarian Universalism
- Welcome children and begin to create community.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn chalice-lighting words and opening and closing songs to use in each session
- Learn about the Sources of our Unitarian Universalist beliefs
- Connect a story about the beginnings of the universe with our higher calling to love
- Portray love unfolding in the universe, by making a seed art project.

SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	0
Opening	7
Activity 1: Pass the Seed Name Game	8
Activity 2: Group Behavior Covenant	5

Activity 3: Story — The Everything Seed	15
Activity 4: Universe Seed Art	15
Faith in Action: Creating a Love Will Guide Us Garden	
Closing	10
Alternate Activity 1: Sharing Joys and Concerns	7
Alternate Activity 2: Planting Mystery Seeds	20
Alternate Activity 3: Everything Seed Guided Meditation	10

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Read this session's central story, "The Everything Seed." Imagine you are holding a seed in your hands—a seed that contains a universe. Reflect on the idea that love is also contained in this seed. Close your eyes and imagine love unfolding in our universe, filling our hearts and spirits with a shining light. How you can tend this light, so it will grow and flourish in your life and shine out from you to touch those around you?

SESSION PLAN

WELCOMING AND ENTERING

Materials for Activity

- Name tags
- Markers or crayons

Preparation for Activity

- Set up tables and chairs.
- Place name tags and markers on the tables.

Description of Activity

This activity is appropriate when participants do not arrive in a group but arrive individually before the session begins.

Welcome participants and invite them to sit down and write and decorate their name tags. A second co-leader should greet new parents and explain the plans for the day.

Including All Participants

This is an excellent time for co-leaders to notice the abilities and temperament of each child. Note how they respond to you. Are they shy and reticent? Are they anxious and jumpy? Invite a parent to share any concerns and pertinent information, including information about children's allergies. Do you have a sign-in sheet? While the children settle in with the Opening activity, co-leaders should review the names of the children attending and share any issues that may need special attention during the session.

OPENING (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Chalice and LED/battery-operated candle
- Handout 1, [Ten Million Stars](#) (included in this document)
- Handout 2, [Love Will Guide Us Lyrics](#) (included in this document) (Hymn 131 in *Singing the Living Tradition*)
- Large, black cloth or paper for Night Sky display
- Leader Resource 1, [The North Star](#) (included in this document)
- Leader Resource 2, [The Big Dipper](#) (included in this document)
- Push pins, tape, or sticky tack
- Leader Resource 3, [The Sources of Our Unitarian Universalist Beliefs](#) (included in this document)
- Optional: A recording of the song "Love Will Guide Us" and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Create a paper or fabric Night Sky. The Night Sky will serve as a background to which you will attach—over the course of the program—a paper, cut-out North Star (Leader Resource 1); a Big Dipper (Leader Resource 2); up to 16 Source Stars (provided as a leader resource in each session), and (optional) one 8 1/2x11 UU Source Constellation each time you do the alternate activity provided in sessions 2-16. There are many possibilities for creating a Night Sky display to suit your meeting space. You can attach black fabric or paper to a wall or bulletin board. For a more portable sky, paint a large sheet of foam core or use fabric to make a Night Sky that rolls up. Display the Night Sky in a space where it can remain for the duration of the program or where you can easily re-post it each time the group meets.

- Print out Leader Resource 1, The North Star and Leader Resource 2, The Big Dipper on white or yellow paper. Cut out the star and the constellation. Attach them to the Night Sky, positioning the North Star so it lines up with the two stars at the end of the Big Dipper's bowl.
- Use Leader Resource 3, The Sources of Our Unitarian Universalist Beliefs, to make a poster for the meeting space. A simple way is to download the leader resource, then cut and paste the text of the seven Sources into a new document on your computer and format a one-page poster. Or, display the words of the Sources with pictures to represent each Source. Illustrations help children remember concepts.
- Copy Handout 1, Ten Million Stars, for all participants. Or, save paper by writing the words on newsprint to post for the duration of the program.
- Copy Handout 2, Love Will Guide Us Lyrics, for all participants. Or, copy the lyrics on a sheet of newsprint, and post. The children will sing "Love Will Guide Us" at each Opening.
- Plan to collect and store Handouts 1 and 2 (or the newsprint sheets) for re-use in future sessions.
- Optional: Plan to play the tune of "Love Will Guide Us" for the group; find a [music clip online](#) (at beemp3.com/download.php?file=2769073&song=hymn+love+will+guide+us). Or, invite a member of the choir or another musical volunteer to accompany the song or help you teach it.

Description of Activity

This activity establishes the program's opening ritual and introduces the Night Sky display.

Gather the children in a circle. Distribute Handout 1, Ten Million Stars, or point out the words printed on newsprint. Light the chalice and invite the group to read the words together responsively.

Indicate the Night Sky display. Say, in your own words:

Have you ever looked up and seen the stars in the night sky? When people first began to ponder the night sky, they wondered, "What are

stars and why are they there? Why do they move?" "Where did I come from? How did life begin? Why am I here?" Although the sky did not give the answers, people used the stars as symbols for their beliefs about the important questions in their lives.

When people looked at their night sky, they saw patterns and pictures in the way the stars were arranged. Thousands of years ago, Greeks and Romans, Chinese and Arabs, Native Americans, and other peoples all around the world named constellations for gods they worshipped, animals they relied on, and everyday scenes from their lives.

Indicate the Big Dipper. Invite the children to discover the pattern of a dipping spoon.

Say:

We call this constellation the Big Dipper. But if we lived in Southern France, we would call it a Saucepan. Do you see a saucepan?

Ask participants what other pictures they see. Encourage them to imagine the constellation upside down. Tell them:

To the Skidi Pawnee Indians, this constellation looked like a sick man being carried on a stretcher.

To the ancient Maya, it was a mythological parrot named Seven Macaw.

To the Hindu, it looked like Seven Wise Men.

To the early Egyptians, it was the thigh and leg of a bull.

To the ancient Chinese, it was the chariot of the Emperor of Heaven.

The Micmac Indians saw a bear instead of the scoop, and hunters tracking the bear instead of the handle.

Now say:

People discovered how to use the stars to guide them when travelling. Knowing the constellations in the night sky helped them find the direction they wanted to go.

In the 19th century, people who were kept as slaves in the Southern states gave the Big Dipper a new name: the Drinking Gourd. This constellation became a symbol of freedom. Slaves who escaped knew they could travel at night, following the Drinking Gourd, to get to the Northern states where they would be free.

Say, while pointing to the North Star:

This one star does not move much in the Night Sky. The earth rotates and orbits around the sun, but this star, the North Star, is located directly above the North Pole, so it seems to always stay in the same place in the sky. Travelers without a map, a compass, or a GPS can use the North Star to know where they are and where they are going.

Now indicate the poster you have made of the seven Sources. Say, in your own words:

For Unitarian Universalists, our Sources guide us, like stars in the Night Sky guide travelers. We use the wisdom of many Sources to help us

answer the big questions about what we believe—just like ancient peoples used the stars.

We will learn about all seven Sources on our UU Sources poster. And we will learn about something else that guides us: love. Love is always there, like the North Star. It can always help us know where we are. Love helps guide us, as Unitarian Universalists, to make the right choices and decisions.

Indicate the Night Sky display.

Love will be our North Star as we build a Night Sky together. Each time we meet, we will add stars to our Night Sky as we discover the Sources that guide Unitarian Universalists, just as the stars have guided seekers and travelers for thousands of years.

Distribute Handout 2, Love Will Guide Us Lyrics or indicate the lyrics you have posted. Sing "Love Will Guide Us" together.

Collect handouts or newsprint for re-use.

Including All Participants

For participants who are not fluent readers, take time to teach the opening words and the song aurally, so children can come to know them from memory.

We highly recommend using an LED chalice to avoid a fire hazard and include participants who are sensitive to smoke or scents.

ACTIVITY 1: PASS THE SEED NAME GAME (8 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A large seed such as a lima bean, avocado pit, or acorn

Description of Activity

Gather participants in a standing circle. Show them the seed you are holding and say:

This seed can grow into anything you imagine—something tiny like a violet or enormous like an oak tree. The only thing it can't turn into is something that has to be built, like an airplane. We are going to pass the seed around the circle. When you have the seed you will tell us your name and then without words you will use your hands and body to show us what you imagine the seed growing into by acting it out. The person next to you will try to guess what it is with help from the group.

Go first, to model. State your name and then pretend to stretch the air around the seed, making the shape the seed will turn into. Use your body to become the item, for example, use your arms as branches if you are a tree. To show an apple, pretend to cup it in your hand and bite it. When the next person guesses what your seed grew into, pass the seed to that person for their turn.

Continue until all have had a turn. Briefly process the activity by asking participants to consider how amazing it is that tiny objects, seeds, grow into bigger, fully formed trees, fruits, plants, and flowers.

Including All Participants

If the group includes visually impaired children, adapt the activity by describing aloud what is being acted out.

ACTIVITY 2: GROUP BEHAVIOR COVENANT (5 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape

Preparation for Activity

- Write "Covenant" at the top of a sheet of newsprint, and post.

Description of Activity

Creating a covenant empowers the children to take responsibility for their individual and collective behavior, and helps create a safe place for learning.

Indicate the newsprint you have posted and ask if anyone knows what a covenant is. Affirm that it is a promise. Explain that the group will list some promises everyone will make to help create a positive learning environment where everybody is cared for and safe and where we are guided by love. Ask:

- What will help this group be a place where everyone feels safe, everyone feels welcome, and everyone is able to learn and have fun?
- What should we promise to do, or not to do?

Write suggestions on newsprint. If you need to prompt the group, suggest listening to one another other, including everybody in activities, sharing, taking turns, helping one another, keeping our hands to ourselves, or being kind. Whenever possible, help participants reframe "don'ts" such as "don't insult others," "don't hit," or "don't lie" as their opposite, desirable behaviors such as "use kind words," "respect each other's need for safety," or "be honest." When all the ideas are on newsprint, have the group, including co-leaders, choose the most important promises. These should include listening to one another, keeping our hands to ourselves, and including everybody.

Have everyone sign their name on the covenant, including co-leaders, and post it in the room. As new children or adults join the group they should sign the covenant, too. You can say:

When you sign the covenant, it means you agree to promise the rest of us that you will follow it.

Assure participants that if anyone in the group ever feels that the promises in the covenant are being broken, they can talk to a leader, who will make sure the matter is addressed.

Note: Keep this exercise brief. If children are not engaging in the process, be sure the most important rules are included and then move on to the next activity.

ACTIVITY 3: STORY — THE EVERYTHING SEED (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A copy of the story "The Everything Seed" or a copy of the book [The Everything Seed](#), (at www.uuabookstore.org/) by Carole Martignacco, illustrated by Joy Troyer, available from the [UUA bookstore](#) (at www.uuabookstore.org/)
- A large basket
- Objects to place in the basket that are related to the story "The Everything Seed," such as images of the universe and our galaxy, models of planets or other space objects, various types and sizes of seeds such as sunflower, pumpkin, acorn, beans, pine cone, milkweed, or poppy seeds
- A large seed, visible when held between your fingers, such as a lima bean, avocado pit, or acorn
- A chime, rain stick, or other calming sound instrument
- Optional: Box or small table and a decorative cloth cover
- Optional: Fidget Basket, see [Leader Resource 4](#) (included in this document)

Preparation for Activity

- Place the story-related items and the chime, rain stick, or other sound instrument in the story basket. Place the filled basket in the storytelling area you have designated.
- Read the story a few times. Plan how you will use items from the story basket as props.
- Optional: To provide a focal point where story-related items can sit while you tell the story, set up a box or table next to your storytelling area and drape it with a decorative cloth.

- Optional: If you have a basket of fidget objects for children who will listen and learn more effectively with something in their hands, make the basket available during this activity. Remind children where it is before you begin the "centering" part of this activity. See Leader Resource 4, Fidget Objects, for a full description of fidget baskets and guidance for using them.

Description of Activity

Gather the children in a circle in the storytelling area and show them the story basket. Say something like, "Let's see what's in our story basket this week."

Tell the group the items in the story basket will be placed on this table after the children have passed them around the circle. Take the story-related items from the basket, one at a time, and pass them around. Objects that are fragile, or which should not be passed around for any reason, can be held up for all to see and then placed directly on the table. Briefly name the various objects.

Now remove the sound instrument from the story basket. Tell participants that every time you tell a story in Love Will Guide Us, you will first use the instrument to help them get their ears, their minds, and their bodies ready to listen. Invite them to sit comfortably and close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so). You may tell them that closing their eyes can help them focus just on listening. In a calm voice, say, in your own words:

As you breathe in, feel your body opening up with air. As you breathe out, feel yourself relaxing.

Repeat this once or twice and then say:

When I hit the chime (turn the rain stick over), listen as carefully as you can. See how long you can hear its sound. When you can no longer hear it, open your eyes and you will know it is time for the story to begin.

Sound the chime or other instrument. When the sound has gone, begin telling the story, "The Everything Seed," which illustrates the origins of our universe with the metaphor of an unfolding seed.

Sound the rain stick to indicate the story is over. Bring back the story basket with its seeds and take one out. Take a few minutes to guide the children in a brief discussion, using these questions:

- I wonder what things were inside that Everything Seed? (Lead participants to list things in our universe.)
- How do you think love came out of the Everything Seed? How love could be inside a seed?
- What sorts of ways might our universe continue to unfold? What new things might grow out of the Everything Seed?
- Why is it important we remember that we need to love each other and everything on Earth? (Lift up the meaning of the interconnected web of life to Unitarian Universalists.)

Including All Participants

You may wish to make fidget objects available to children who find it difficult to sit still while listening to a story. Fidget objects, described in Leader Resource 4, can provide a non-disruptive outlet for a child who needs to move or who benefits from sensory stimulation.

ACTIVITY 4: UNIVERSE SEED ART (15 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- A large quantity of seeds in a variety of shapes and sizes, for example, garden seeds, poppy seeds, sesame seeds, milkweed pods, and beans
- Trays to hold the seeds, preferably with dividers to separate the types of seeds (egg cartons would be ideal)
- Craft glue
- Sheets of oak tag or cardboard for all participants
- Pencils

Preparation for Activity

- Place seeds in trays, divided by type of seed.
- Set trays on work tables with the craft glue and oak tag or cardboard.

Description of Activity

Gather participants in a sitting circle and say in your own words:

Love is a central force in Unitarian Universalism. It is what guides us like the North Star. It's pretty amazing to think that love was part of the universe right in the very beginning. We are going to make pictures by drawing what love looks like unfolding in the universe with a pencil and then gluing seeds on the drawing.

Move to the work area and instruct participants to draw their image of love unfolding in the universe on their oak tag paper and then glue seeds onto it. Allow children to interpret the question however they wish. Some might want to draw spirals; others might draw hearts or pictures of loving relationships. There is no right answer or image. If children are finding it difficult to create an image, you might ask:

- What do you imagine love looks like?
- What do you imagine it looks like when things come into the universe?
- How might you draw what it feels like to love?
- Can you think of a good symbol for love?

CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Taking It Home
- Optional: Handout 3, [Our Sources Lyrics](#) (included in this document)

- Optional: A recording of the song "[Our Sources](http://img.uua.org/tapestry/lovewillguideus/audio/Our_Sources.mp3)" (at img.uua.org/tapestry/lovewillguideus/audio/Our_Sources.mp3) and a music player

Preparation for Activity

- Write the words for the sixth UU Source on newsprint, and post:
Our Unitarian Universalist beliefs come from the harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life.
- Download, adapt, and copy Taking It Home for all participants (or plan to email it to all families after the session).
- Optional: Prepare to teach and lead the song "Our Sources."
 - Copy Session 1, Handout 3, Our Sources Lyrics, or write the words on newsprint, and post. Plan to store handouts or newsprint for re-use.
 - Learn the song so you can teach it to the group. Listen to the song online to familiarize yourself with it. You might invite a member of the choir or someone in the congregation comfortable leading songs to learn the song with you and help you.

Description of Activity

Gather the children. Say, in your own words:

Today we talked about love coming from the same seed our universe came from. We talked about how love is like the North Star in the night sky—always there to guide us. Next time we meet, we will start learning about the Sources of our Unitarian Universalist faith. Each of the Sources helps us move with love, in the direction of love, just like the constellations can help a traveler find the North Star in the night sky.

If you wish to sing "Our Sources," distribute Handout 3 or indicate the newsprint where you have posted the lyrics. Teach/lead the song, with a musical volunteer if you have invited someone to help. Consider playing the music clip of "Our Sources" for the children to sing along.

Distribute Taking It Home and thank participants.

Save the Night Sky display and the handouts/newsprint to use next time.

Including All Participants

At this age, children have a wide range of reading ability. Do not put individual children on the spot to read aloud.

FAITH IN ACTION: CREATING A LOVE WILL GUIDE US GARDEN

Materials for Activity

- Seeds for plants which will grow well outdoors in your climate
- Shovels, trowels, watering cans, gardening gloves, garden stakes, and other garden tools and materials
- Sunscreen, sun hats, and bug repellent
- Optional: Weather-proof sign to label "Love Will Guide Us Garden" with the name of your congregation and the program year
- Optional: *Frog and Toad Together* by Arnold Lobel (New York: HarperCollins, 1972)

Preparation for Activity

- Along with your minister, Building Committee, Social Action Committee and/or religious educator, select a site for the Love Will Guide Us Garden. Possibilities include your congregation's property, the home of a member of your congregation who could benefit from a garden, a rooftop in an urban setting, or a community location.
- Decide what type of garden to plant (decorative or functional) and what plants you would like to grow. Possibilities include organic vegetables to donate to a local food pantry, flowers (consider including bleeding hearts), or a butterfly

garden. The goal is to create a garden that reflects love. As appropriate, network with local community organizations to determine what sort of garden and plants would be most beneficial. As possible, involve the children in this decision.

- Identify one or more gardeners in your congregation who can help lead this project.
- Establish a seasonally appropriate time to do the planting and invite the congregation to join the children in planting the garden.
- Plan for the continued care of the garden including weeding, watering, and harvesting.

Description of Activity

Plant the seeds according to their instructions. Use garden stakes to label the plants. Post your "Love Will Guide Us Garden" sign.

When the group has finished planting, gather in a circle and read the story, "The Garden," in the book *Frog and Toad Together*.

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

Take a few minutes to evaluate the session with your co-leader immediately afterward, while it is fresh. Share your thoughts with any other team leaders and your religious educator. You might find it helpful to consider these questions:

- Were all children actively engaged? If not, who wasn't and why might that have been? How could they be better included next time?
- How was the timing? What might need to be done differently to work better within our time frame?
- Are we creating a program characterized by inclusion, respect, and welcome? What can we do differently?
- What opportunities did this session give us to model or affirm that we are a community guided by love? How did we turn these opportunities into experiential learning for the children?

- What questions or issues arose in this session that we might like to discuss with our religious educator?

TAKING IT HOME

Love is the vital essence that pervades and permeates, from the center to the circumference, the graduating circles of all thought and action. Love is the talisman of human weal and woe — the open sesame to every soul.
— Elizabeth Cady Stanton, women's civil rights activist in a speech given in 1860

IN TODAY'S SESSION... the children heard the story of "The Everything Seed," which describes the origins of our universe in metaphoric language. We discussed the idea that love was included in that original "everything seed" and learned that love is a guiding force for Unitarian Universalists. Participants created universe seed art representing the love and creativity within our universe.

EXPLORE THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Talk about... theories about how the universe came into being, such as the Big Bang. Talk together about the awesome aspect of our universe's origin. Take turns naming things that were contained in the original, strange ball of matter which exploded to become our universe.

EXTEND THE TOPIC TOGETHER. Try... learning about seeds together. Dissect a seed and see what is inside. If possible, look at seeds under a microscope. Plant some seeds and watch them grow. Help your child create their own indoor or outdoor garden.

Family Adventure. Go on a walk to find as many seeds and seed holders as you can and try to identify the types of plants they will become.

Family Discovery. To learn more about seeds, watch the Scholastic video *The Magic School Bus Goes to Seed*. Or, read, *The Magic School Bus Plants Seeds: A Book About How Living Things Grow* or *The Magic School Bus Gets Planted: A Book About Photosynthesis*, both by Joanna Cole.

To hear about the universe's origin in metaphoric language, read together [The Everything Seed](http://www.uuabookstore.org/) (at www.uuabookstore.org/) by Carole Martignacco (Minnesota: Beaver's Pond Press, 2003). Another book to read together is *Born with a Bang: The Universe Tells Its Cosmic Story: Book One* by Jennifer Morgan (Dawn Publications, 2002).

A Family Game. In the African game Mancala, two opponents try to collect the most seeds by taking turns dropping seeds into small cups carved into a board. The goal is to capture as many of your opponents' seeds as possible. Purchase Mancala at a toy and game store or play a version [online](http://www.lookoutnow.com/game/mancala.htm) (at www.lookoutnow.com/game/mancala.htm).

A Family Ritual. Start a yearly tradition: Plant a garden together. Create a ritual for the planting. For instance, you might read the story "The Garden," from the book *Frog and Toad Together* by Arnold Lobel, or sing "The Garden Song" by David Mallett, recorded by many artists. You could gather water from rivers and lakes that you visit over the course of the year and use it to water the newly planted seeds.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 1: SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS (7 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Felt candle-and-flame board (see Preparation for Activity)
- Two baskets to hold felt flames and felt candles
- Optional: LED/battery-operated tea lights or candles

Preparation for Activity

- Make a felt candle-and-flame board: Staple or nail a large piece of felt around a wooden board or a sheet of heavy cardboard. Cut out a variety of flame shapes and a variety of candle shapes from different colors of felt.
- Set the felt board in a secure place where children can easily use it. Place the felt "flames" in one basket and the "candles" in the other and place baskets near the felt board.

Description of Activity

This activity invites children to experience a ritual enacted in many Unitarian Universalist congregations. Sharing joys and concerns can deepen a group's sense of

community. It gives participants a chance to share a portion of their lives in a unique way, encourages listening to others and, in many cases, makes a link with the adult worship experience.

Introduce the concept of sharing joys and concerns by saying something like:

As a community of caring people who are kind to each other, we want to know what has made you very happy or what has made you sad. You are invited to put a flame on one of these felt candles, place it on this felt board, and then share your joy or concern. Everyone in the room is asked to listen with respect. You do not have to say anything at all, if you do not want to.

Invite participants to come forward one at a time. Of course, anyone may pass. If the children do not know each other very well yet, or a new person is visiting, have everyone say their name before they begin for the group to repeat back. As children share, model listening respectfully and without comment.

Variation

Instead of inviting participants to share joys and concerns, posit a question participants can answer briefly. For example, a question to fit this session might be "What do you like about the night sky?"

Including All Participants

If any children are reluctant to stand to address the group, allow them to speak joys and concerns from where they sit or invite them to light a candle silently.

This sharing circle can be a vital part of congregational ministry. Many congregations have in place a safe congregation policy in the event a participant reveals they are being hurt by someone. It will be important to alert your religious educator, minister, or Board president to any troubling issue that may arise in this sharing.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 2: PLANTING MYSTERY SEEDS (20 MINUTES)

Materials for Activity

- Seeds for a variety of plants that have similar growing needs, preferably ones that require little care during the week, such as a hardy annual mix
- Bowl to hold loose seeds
- Window box
- Planting soil
- Organic fertilizer
- Watering can and spoons or trowels

Preparation for Activity

- Empty the seed packets into the bowl and hide any identifying information.
- Place planting supplies in your work area.

Description of Activity

Say in your own words:

We are going to plant our own everything seeds. What they will grow into will be a mystery. Just like there was love in the original everything seed, we will imagine that these seeds will unfold as love into this room and into our hearts, so that we are always guided by love when we are together. Our mystery plants will remind us to let love be our guide.

Have the participants plant the seeds in the window box and water them.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY 3: EVERYTHING SEED GUIDED MEDITATION (10 MINUTES)

Preparation for Activity

- Read the meditation a few times so you will be comfortable leading it.

Description of Activity

Have participants sit or lie down in a comfortable position with eyes closed. Read the meditation in a gentle, calm voice. Pause where indicated to allow participants time to experience the meditation fully.

Take a few minutes to pay attention to your breath. Breathe in slowly and allow the breath to fill your lungs and make your belly rise. Breathe out slowly.

(Pause.)

Feel your body relaxing. As you breathe in and out the relaxation spreads through your body, starting with your toes and moving up through your legs into your hips and up into your chest and back and arms. Relax your face and neck. Your whole body is completely comfortable and relaxed.

(Pause.)

Now imagine that you are a seed. This seed can become anything you dream of.

(Pause.)

Imagine that you have been planted somewhere safe and warm. It is a special place and you feel loved and happy. You are filled with love in your heart.

(Pause.)

You begin to sprout and grow. What does it feel like to grow?

(Pause.)

You are changing. What is it you are becoming?

(Pause.)

What does your new body look like? What things are you able to do?

(Pause.)

Imagine yourself moving around in the safe place where you were planted. What do you do?

(Pause.)

When you are ready, imagine yourself changing again. Now you are turning back into yourself.

(Pause.)

I will count backward from 10. When I get to the number 1 you can open your eyes and rejoin the group.

10 ... 9 ... 8 ... 7 ... 6 ... 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1

Invite the children to share briefly what they experienced or imagined during the meditation.

Including All Participants

Some people do not feel safe closing their eyes when they are in a group. If any participant resists, suggest they find a single point of focus to look at instead.

LOVE WILL GUIDE US: SESSION 1: STORY: THE EVERYTHING SEED

From *The Everything Seed* by Carole Martignacco, illustrated by Joy Troyer, (Berkeley, California: Tricycle Press, 2006). Used with permission. Carole Martignacco is a poet, singer, grandmother, and former RE director. A Unitarian Universalist minister, she currently serves as minister to the UUestrie, a congregation in Quebec's Eastern Townships, and as president of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada.

We highly recommend buying the picture book "The Everything Seed," by Carole Martignacco with gorgeous batik illustrations by Joy Troyer, available from the [UUA bookstore](http://www.uuabookstore.org) (at www.uuabookstore.org).

Have you ever watched

a seed grow?

Have you ever noticed

how it begins

so small,

so still,

so quiet,

like a gift wanting to be opened...

and how slowly

it wakes up,

begins to unfold,

growing

into something

larger...

and larger ...

and LARGER?

Then you know
that whatever
comes from a seed
usually ends up
looking very little like
the seed it came from...
which is also true
of the very first
seed.

Once, long, long ago,
way back before the beginning...
so long ago
there was no such thing
as time, because
there was no one there
to count it...

Everywhere was
a huge
deep
mysterious
place,
like something
waiting to happen.

There were no stars,

no Sun or Moon.

There was no place like Earth...

not a drop of water,

or a single tree,

or rock

or flower...

and no living beings anywhere.

But in that deep

waiting space

was hidden

the tiniest point

of something

no bigger than

a seed.

(Leader: Hold up a seed.)

It was not

a flower seed.

It was not an elm tree seed.

It was not a seed of corn,

although all those things

were included in the seed.

You might call it

an Everything Seed

because that

is what it became.

No one knows where that first seed came from,
or how it was planted,
or how it knew (in the way that only
seeds seem to know) how long to wait
for just the right moment
to sprout and grow.

But all at once, this tiny seed,
cradled and nourished
in the rich soil of space,
woke up,
broke open,
and began
to unfold.

Unfolding ...

Unfolding ...

and blossoming forth...
into an enormous blazing
ball of bright light...

like a great

Grandmother Sun.

And the Universe was born.

Out fluttered

the galaxies,

like a storm of snowflakes

swirling...

and gathering

into the brightest,

most blindingly beautiful

clouds of stars.

And out of those starclouds

whirled our own star,

the one we call the Sun...

and our Earth

and our Moon...

and all

the round spinning planets

we have learned how to name.

And this is

the secret of

that tiny seed:

You and I

were there

in the very beginning...

just as the idea

for each leaf

on a big oak tree

lies hidden inside an acorn

(Leader: If you have an acorn, hold it up.)

We were there

with all

the stars

and planets,

all the rocks

and oceans,

plants

and animals,

and people.

Everything

that is now,

ever was,

or ever

will be

was inside

that first

tiny seed.

So, whenever

you hold a seed

in your hand

and wonder

what it could become

imagine how you,

and all that is here,
once came from
the tiniest speck
of an Everything Seed
before it sprouted
and grew
long, long ago
in the way-back
beginning of time.

Now, if this
were an ordinary story,
it would end right here.

But this story of the Universe
keeps unfolding.

What once began
in a blazing blossom of light
continues every day.

New stars sprout open
in the deep soil
of space.

New plants and animals
appear on the Earth.

Seeds of many kinds...
are scattered

everywhere...

to help us remember.

And new people

are born

every day

with the spark

of that first light

still alive

and burning

deep inside...

Waiting...

like

the Everything Seed,

to shine

in ways

that are yet

to be known.

LOVE WILL GUIDE US: SESSION 1: HANDOUT 1: TEN MILLION STARS

By Nancy Wood, copyright 1973, in *Spirit Walker* (Delacorte Press, 1993). Used by permission.

Leader:

Inside each raindrop swims the sun.

Inside each flower breathes the moon.

Participants:

Inside me dwell ten million stars,

Leader:

One for each of my ancestors:

Participants:

The elk, the raven, the mouse, the man,

The flower, the coyote, the lion, the fish.

Leader:

Ten million different stars am I,

Participants:

But only one spirit connecting all.

LOVE WILL GUIDE US: SESSION 1: HANDOUT 2: LOVE WILL GUIDE US LYRICS

Hymn 131 in *Singing the Living Tradition*, the Unitarian Universalist hymnbook. Lyrics by Sally Rogers. Used with permission.

Love will guide us, peace has tried us,

Hope inside us, will lead the way

On the road from greed to giving.

Love will guide us through the hard night.

If you cannot speak like angels,

If you cannot speak before thousands,

You can give from deep within you.

You can change the world with your love.

(Repeat first verse.)

LOVE WILL GUIDE US: SESSION 1: HANDOUT 3: OUR SOURCES LYRICS

Words and music by Kathleen Tracey.

Hear the [music clip](http://img.uua.org/tapestry/lovewillguideus/audio/Our_Sources.mp3) (at img.uua.org/tapestry/lovewillguideus/audio/Our_Sources.mp3) of Kathleen Tracey sing the song. [The Music \(PDF\)](http://www.uua.org/documents/lfd/our_sources.pdf) (at www.uua.org/documents/lfd/our_sources.pdf) can be found here. (NOTE - pdf will not load into the downloaded word version of the curriculum - you'll need to download it separately.)

The sense of wonder we all share (*Direct experience*)

Lives that remind us to be kind and fair (*Deeds of women and men*)

Like starlight beacons in the night

They point the way to love

Wisdom from teachers all over the world (*World religions*)

Love that reaches out to others in turn (*Jewish and Christian teachings*)

Like starlight beacons in the night

They point the way to love

(BRIDGE)

O shine down mystery

The path may be different for you and me

Let's walk together as we learn and grow

And sing about the things we know

We can use our minds to see what's true (*Humanist teachings*)

And feel the circle of life we're connected to (*Earth-based teachings*)

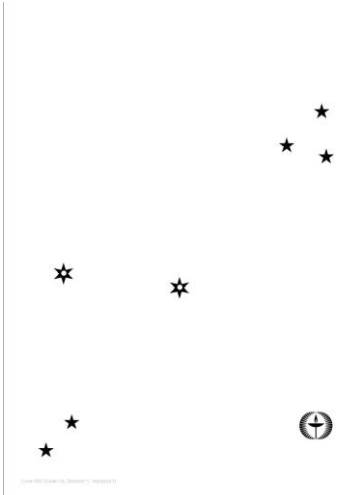
These are things that we believe

And they point the way to love

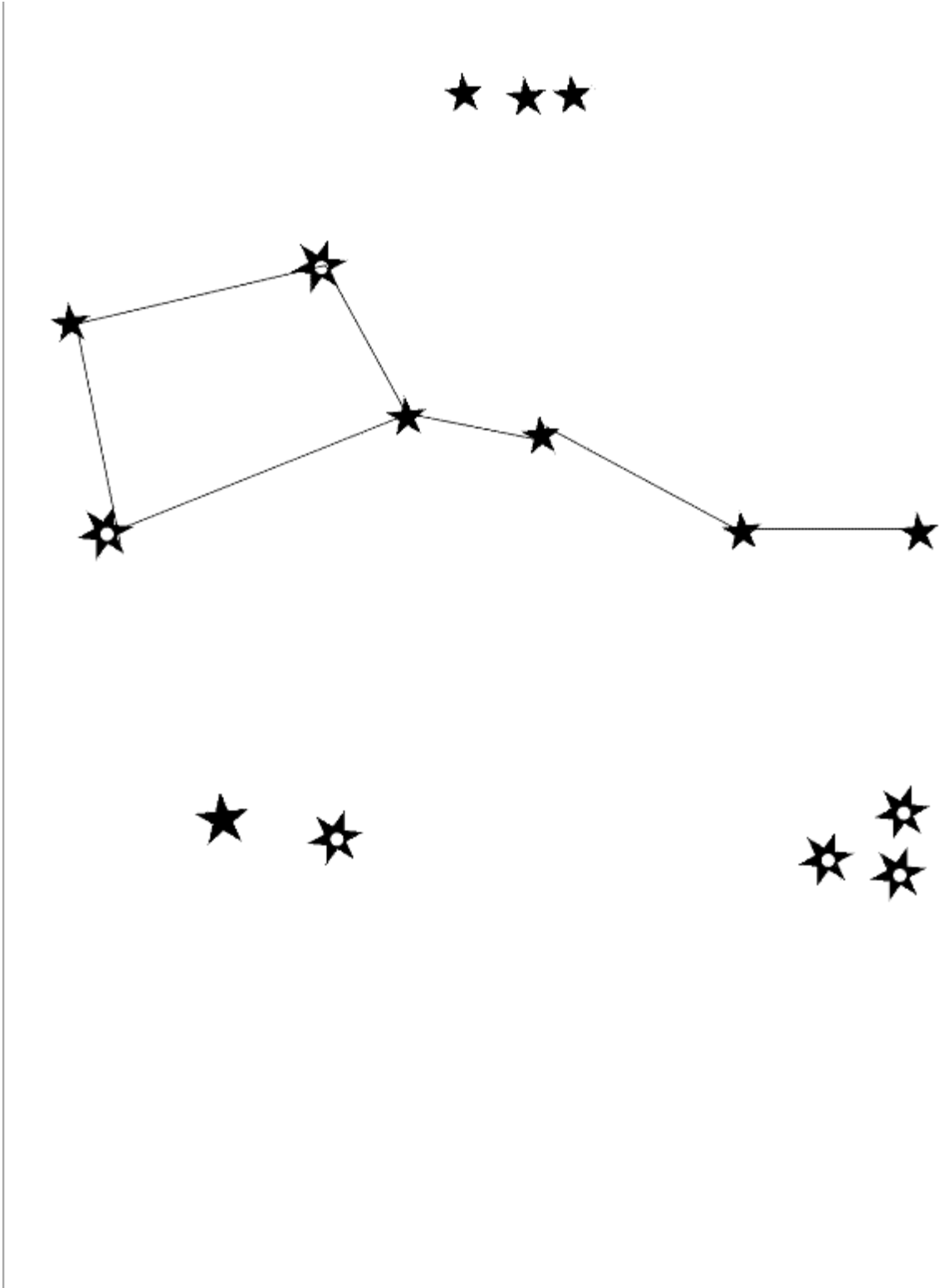
These are things that we believe

And they point the way to love

**LOVE WILL GUIDE US: SESSION 1:
LEADER RESOURCE 1: THE NORTH STAR**



**LOVE WILL GUIDE US: SESSION 1:
LEADER RESOURCE 2: THE BIG DIPPER**



LOVE WILL GUIDE US: SESSION 1: LEADER RESOURCE 3: THE SOURCES OF OUR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST BELIEFS

Adapted from a poster published by the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Our Unitarian Universalist beliefs come from the sense of wonder we all share.

Our Unitarian Universalist beliefs come from the women and men of long ago and today whose lives remind us to be kind and fair.

Our Unitarian Universalist beliefs come from the ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions.

Our Unitarian Universalist beliefs come from the Jewish and Christian teachings that tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.

Our Unitarian Universalist beliefs come from the use of reason and the discoveries of science.

Our Unitarian Universalist beliefs come from the harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life.

Our Unitarian Universalist beliefs come from faithful words and actions that shape our Unitarian and Universalist heritage.

LOVE WILL GUIDE US: SESSION 1: LEADER RESOURCE 4: FIDGET OBJECTS

The idea for a basket of "fidget objects" to provide children during session activities comes from Sally Patton, author, workshop leader, and advocate for children with special needs.

A basket of fidget objects is a simple, inexpensive way to include and welcome children who find it difficult to sit still or who learn better while moving.

Provide a basket for fidget objects. Fill it with pipe cleaners, modeling clay, and other quiet, manipulable objects.

Introduce the fidget object basket to the group by saying that some people learn best when their hands are busy. Give an example such as someone who knits while listening to a radio program or doodles during a meeting or class. Point out the fidget object basket. Tell the children they may quietly help themselves to items they may use to keep their hands busy if this helps them to listen. However, also tell the children the fidget object basket will be put away if the items become a distraction from the story or any other group activity.

You can make the fidget object basket available for the duration of the session, or bring it out only during activities, such as hearing a story told, which require children to sit still and listen for a significant period of time.

FIND OUT MORE

Our Unitarian Universalist Sources

A book highly recommended for this program is *Our Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism* by John A. Buehrens and F. Forrest Church. Each section includes two essays on the six Sources of Unitarian Universalism.

How to Find the North Star and the Big Dipper

From an [Astronomy/Space web page posted by Jim Loy](#) (at www.jimloy.com/):

People think that the North Star is very bright. It is not. It is moderately bright, and it is surrounded by very dim stars. So, it stands out, a little. But, the main clue to where the North Star is, is the Big Dipper...

The North Star is at the end of the handle of the Little Dipper. It is hard to find the Little Dipper, without first finding the North Star. Normally, you find the Big Dipper, and then sight along the two stars at the end of the bowl of the Big Dipper, and the North Star is almost in line with those two stars (but not exactly).

Once you have found the North Star a few times, it becomes easy to find. The North Star is not exactly North. It is a little less than one degree from being directly over the Earth's North Pole. One degree may not seem like much. But, the apparent diameter of the moon is about a half degree.

Different Cultures, Same Sky, Different Constellations

Stars in the night sky are visible to everyone on Earth, yet different cultures have named the patterns they can see according to their own archetypes and beliefs. An astronomy FAQ on the [College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University](#) (at www.csbsju.edu/) website says:

The Big Dipper is ...part of a larger pattern known to the Greeks as Ursa Major, the Great Bear. The seven stars of the Big Dipper have inspired many stories, perhaps because they are bright and located so near the north celestial pole, around which the stars rotate during the course of the night. But not everyone calls it a Dipper. The British call it a Plough. In Southern France, it is a Saucepan. The Skidi Pawnee Indians saw a stretcher on which a sick man was carried. To the ancient Maya, it was a mythological parrot named Seven Macaw. Hindu sky lore called it the Seven Rishis, or Wise Men. To the early Egyptians, it was the thigh and leg of a bull. The ancient Chinese thought of it as a special chariot for the Emperor of the Heaven or some other celestial bureaucrat. For the Micmac Indians of Canada's Maritime Provinces, along with several other North American Indian tribes, the bowl of the Big Dipper was a bear, and the stars in the handle represented hunters tracking the bear. And in the

19th century, the Big Dipper became a symbol of freedom for runaway slaves, who "followed the Drinking Gourd" to the northern states.

The Big Bang and the Universe

A good book for children that tells about the Big Bang is *Born with a Bang: The Universe Tells Its Cosmic Story: Book One* by Jennifer Morgan (Dawn Publications, 2002).

Reflections on the Nature of God, edited by Michael Reagan (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2004), combines inspiring pictures of the universe with reflections on the nature of God from a variety of religious perspectives.