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Hello UU Explorer Families!

Enclosed please find the First Church Children's UU Explorer January 2022 packet.

The following story and activities were taken for UUA Tapestry of Faith "Faithful Journeys" session 6 *Keep Learning*. Each packet will focus on one or more of our 7 principles. This packet focuses on our 3rd principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations. Each packet will have a story and a few activities to follow.

Try to set aside some time to do the reading, an activity,...or just to talk about why the principles/sources are important. As always, please use the packet as it works best for your family.

I have also included a few activities you can do based on Martin Luther King day this month.

Celebrating his life is so important so pick one or 2 activities and open up the conversation!

## Activity 1 Story

# Learning By Heart Sophia Lyon Fahs

"Mama, Mama, why do we just keep going and going and not going anywhere?" asked little Sophie. Her family was crossing the wide Pacific Ocean on a big ship bound for America. Sophie Lyon was an American girl, three and a half years old, making her first trip to America. She and her older brothers and sisters had all been born in China where their father was an evangelical Christian minister and their mother had started a school for Chinese girls.

When they made that the long trip to America in 1880, Sophie's parents thought their family would go back to China after one year. But the plans changed, and Sophie never returned to China. As she grew up, her memories of China grew dim. But she hoped when she grew up she could go to other countries as a Christian teacher, like her parents.

In college, Sophie joined a club for young people who also wanted to become Christian teachers. She met another devoted volunteer named Harvey Fahs. They began writing letters to each other, and made plans to travel and teach together. Six years later, they were married. But instead of traveling to another country, Sophie and Harvey moved to New York City. Harvey had a job, and Sophia Lyon Fahs taught Sunday school and continued her studies, excited about the new ideas she was learning.

Sophia and Harvey's first child was born in 1904. In those days, many women gave up their outside work after they became mothers. But Sophia was determined to keep learning and to keep teaching Sunday school, and she did. As it turned out, being a mother also helped Sophia learn! She learned about children from being with her own children and listening to their ideas and questions.

(You may want to pause here and solicit children's comments on ways children can teach adults.)

When her children asked questions, Sophia tried her best to answer them. Her children had very interesting questions, like "Where does snow come from?" and "Where are we before we are born?" As she tried to answer her children's questions, Sophia learned how much she did not know! You might think not having all the answers took away Sophia's faith, but it was the opposite. She started to believe that to have a strong faith, finding questions you really care about is just as important as finding answers.

One time when Sophia taught a religious education class, she told a lively story about a real person who had been a Christian teacher in another country. The children were eager to hear the story and eager to talk about it. Like her own children at home, the

children asked questions — the interesting kind of questions that let Sophia know they were thinking and learning.

Sophia's ideas about religion changed over time. As a young person, she had thought Christianity was the one true religion and people all over the world should learn Bible stories. She grew to realize the Bible was not the only book with truth in it. She collected stories from all over the world, filled with truth and beauty to help children's spirits stretch and grow. She published the stories in a book called *From Long Ago and Many Lands*.

In those days, when most adults thought children's minds were like empty jars to fill with learning, Sophia thought differently. She thought children were more like gardens, already planted with seeds of possibility for learning and growing. She thought a teacher's job was to provide the good soil and water and sunlight a garden needs to grow. In religious school, a teacher could help children grow in their spirit and faith.

(Ask: What do you think would help a child grow in spirit? What should church school teachers like us give you, to help you grow?)

Affirm or suggest: Teachers can give children a safe place to learn; tools, such as books and art supplies and music. We can show you how adults worship, sing, and celebrate together in faith. We can help you know when your actions are faithful ones, for goodness and justice. We can take you on field trips and tell you stories. But no one can give a child wisdom or faith or spiritual growth. These things can only grow from within. People learn by experiencing the world for themselves — by feeling their own feelings, and by seeing and touching and doing. That is what Sophia Fahs believed.)

When Sophia Fahs wrote about her beliefs, the president of the American Unitarian Association was impressed. He asked her to talk to Unitarian religious educators — people such as (*insert your own name(s) and/or the name of your director of religious education*). Unitarian Sunday school teachers liked her ideas very much. And that is why, when you come here, we encourage you to see, and touch, and do ... and to ask lots of questions.

When she was 82 years old, Sophia became a Unitarian minister. Her own life was a great example of her belief that every person in a congregation should continue to learn and grow, from the smallest child to the oldest adult. Sophia Fahs lived a long, long time — 102 years — and she never stopped learning new things.

If she were alive today and came to visit us, Sophia Fahs would want to know about our experiences, like the ones we have posted on our Faithful Journeys Path, and how they have helped us learn and grow. She would want to know what stories we have read and

how they have helped to awaken our spirits. She would want to know how we ask questions, seek answers, and learn from each other. Imagine how happy she would be to see us watering one another's seeds of spiritual growth in Faithful Journeys today.

## Activity 2: Mirror Dance

### Materials for Activity

- Music without lyrics (classical, jazz, etc.) and appropriate music player

### Preparation for Activity

- Choose music conducive to slow, contemplative movement.

### Description of Activity

Tell the children:

Many people think of spiritual activities as quiet time to focus inside yourself. But we can also use our spirituality when we connect beyond words with each other. We're going to try a movement activity that is about staying connected to another person - without touching at all.

Explain that the family will divide into pairs, with each person in the pair designated as a "one" or a "two." The pairs will stand facing each other, fairly close, but not touching. When the music begins, the people who are "ones" will begin to move. The "twos" will mirror their movements, trying to look as much like a mirror reflection of the other person as possible. The goal of the "one" is not to trick the "two," but to move in ways that make it possible for both people to seem connected, mirror images of each other. After a couple of minutes, stop the music and tell the pairs to switch roles, so that the "twos" are initiating the movement and the "ones" are following.

When both sides have had a turn to lead a mirror dance, invite the children to reflect on their experiences. Was it harder to lead or to follow? Do you think you have more of a sense of your spirit when you move wordlessly, together with another person, or by yourself?

# Activity 3: Drawing to Music

## Materials for Activity

- Blank paper and crayons, markers or pastels
- Music without lyrics (classical, jazz, world music instrumental, etc.) and appropriate music player (Note: Choose music you feel evokes mystery and wonder.)

## Preparation for Activity

- Set out art supplies so that children each have a sheet of paper on a writing surface and can reach crayons/markers on their own.

## Description of Activity

One of the Sources for our Unitarian Universalist living tradition is transcending mystery and wonder that moves us to a renewal of the spirit. Mystery, wonder, and spirit are hard to define, and they may mean something a bit different to each person. Sometimes through art we can experience and express ideas we cannot express in words.

Tell the children:

We are going to hear some music. Listen with your spirit, as well as your ears. You can draw about how the music makes your spirit feel. Draw whatever comes to you to describe mystery and wonder. It does not need to be a picture of anything real; it can be a pattern or design or just the colors you feel like using. Let the music be the only sound we hear while we draw. Let the music speak to your spirit and your heart.

Assure them there is no right or wrong way to portray mystery and wonder, and affirm that they need not draw pictures of actual things in order to show a feeling or idea.

Allow the children at least three minutes to draw. Then, stop the music and invite them to continue working on their drawings in quiet for a minute or two more.

Ask the children to share their drawings and/or articulate what their spirits heard in the music or what feelings inside of them the images came from. Affirm all drawings as expressions of spirit. Focus on the process ("How did it feel to draw that?") and avoid praise, criticism, or interpretation of the product. ("Is that a horse? Are those clouds?")

Ask, "Do you feel you gave your spirit some exercise, doing this activity today?"

## Activity 4: Create a Zen Garden

### Materials for Activity

- A small, low-sided box, such as a shoe box, for each child
- Play sand (available at hardware stores) or unscented clay kitty litter and a scoop or flour, sugar or salt.
- Small items such as attractive stones, acorns, shells, etc., a handful for each participant
- Plastic forks

### Preparation for Activity

- Begin a sample Zen garden to show the children.

### Description of Activity

Gather the children at work tables and say:

The original Zen gardens were made by Japanese Buddhists to create an outdoor space that invited anyone who saw the garden to take quiet time to meditate. Zen gardens are usually quite simple, with gravel raked into neat patterns, and a few rocks, plants or grassy areas carefully arranged. We're going to create our own miniature Zen gardens with boxes, sand and little objects you can arrange as you like. We'll use forks to rake our sand in any pattern you like. Arranging the items in your Zen garden and raking the sand around them is a kind of meditation, a way of getting quiet and focused, so we're going to try to be quiet as we create these gardens. Remember, a Zen garden should be simple. Do not try to crowd too many items in your garden. Leave some space just for the sand.

## Activity 4: Religious Poetry

### Materials for Activity

- A copy of "[The Summer's Day](#)" by Mary Oliver, or another poem. "[Pied Beauty](#)" by Gerard Manley Hopkins is a more difficult poem, yet with a lovely sound and rhythm children may appreciate.

## Poem 133: The Summer Day

About This Program Poet Laureate Youth Ambassador Prizes Audio Recordings Featured Videos Events

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean—

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—

who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what else should I have done?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?

—Mary Oliver

Or

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89). Poems. 1918.

GLORY be to God for dappled things—

For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and  
plough;

5

And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

10

Praise him.



## Preparation for Activity

- Choose a poem your children can understand as a poet's praise, awe, and/or gratitude for the natural world. Familiarize yourself with the poem, so you can read it smoothly and with expression. You might introduce Mary Oliver as a contemporary poet whose works often point out the wondrous aspects of the natural world and how marvelous it is that we can notice and enjoy it. In the Hopkins poem, the speaker praises God by admiring amazing things in nature that are speckled, freckled, or just kind of odd.

## Description of Activity

Reading , listening to, or writing poetry can be a spiritual practice, especially for those with verbal facility and those who learn best by reading or hearing.

Read the poem you chose aloud. Invite the children to enjoy the sound of the words, as well as listen for the meaning of the poem.

Then, ask children for any responses:

- What do they think the poem is about?
- How did the poem make them feel?
- Did any word or few words stand out for them?
- If they felt confused by the poem or some words in it, did that bother them? Or did they enjoy that little bit of mystery?
- Can hearing a poem be a way to grow spiritually? How?
- Could writing a poem be a way to grow spiritually? How?

- How is experiencing a poem by yourself different from reading or hearing one with others?

If you have time, distribute blank paper, pencils, and crayons or markers. Invite children to illustrate or respond to the poem in a drawing, or write their own poem about how nature can be amazing.

January Cool Deed

Martin Luther King Jr life celebration

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (or simply, MLK) is perhaps best known for his “I Have a Dream” speech delivered during the March on Washington on August 28, 1963. However, King was more than his memorable speeches. A pivotal leader during the American civil rights movement, King was also passionate about eliminating poverty. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference announced the Poor People’s Campaign at the end of 1967 and began organizing a protest in Washington, D.C. Though King wasn’t able to see his plans realized, the Poor People’s Campaign continued.

King’s “I Have a Dream” speech and the Poor People’s Campaign are just two of his many accomplishments. How do you introduce your kids to the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.? With such an enormous legacy, it can be a daunting task to properly honor Dr. King, his contributions to the civil rights movement, and his significance in American history and culture. So, we pulled together some Martin Luther King, Jr. project ideas and activities

**Onalee Smith**

Shaped Contributor for HMH

## **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Activities**

### **1. Make a timeline.**

To put the work of MLK into perspective for students, create a timeline of major moments in his life. Some key moments to include are:

- **1955:** Montgomery Bus Boycott, resulting in the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that racial segregation in transportation was unconstitutional
- **1957:** Dr. King elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference
- **1963:** Nonviolent campaign aimed at Birmingham, Alabama, including the [“Letter from a Birmingham Jail”](#)
- **1963:** The [March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom](#) and “I Have a Dream” speech
- **1964:** Nobel Peace Prize win at 35 years old, the youngest person to ever receive the honor
- **1964:** Congress passed the landmark Civil Rights Act
- **1965:** Selma to Montgomery March for Voting Rights in Alabama
- **1965:** Congress passed the Voting Rights Act
- **1967:** Poor People’s Campaign announced
- **1968:** Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was tragically assassinated at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee.

## **2. Deliver speeches.**

Listen to the [“I Have a Dream” speech](#) and encourage dialogue among the kids about Dr. King’s platform of nonviolence and peace. Consider how his path of nonviolence can still improve our world today. Then, ask the kids to think about their dreams for the future. How do they want to see the world improve? After time for reflection, have them present their own versions of the iconic speech.

## **3. Make dreams a reality collage.**

Use a sentence prompt. “I have a dream that” and “I can make my dream come true by” prompts are easy ways to provoke deeper thought. Turn the dreams into a reality (a real collage, at least) by having them trace their hands on paper of different

colors. Cut out the handprints, write their dreams down on the many-colored hands, and arrange them into a beautiful collage of dreams.

#### **4. Hold a parade or a march.**

Dr. King championed peaceful protests by organizing marches. Today, we often celebrate MLK Day by having a parade celebrating his life. You can have your own peace parade by having the kids make signs displaying quotes, hopes, and ideas for spreading peace.

Please take a picture of your kids with their signs, poems, collage or any other projects they did this month and send it to me at [lisapilat@dedhamuu.org](mailto:lisapilat@dedhamuu.org).