



Welcome to RE Express PLUS
From the Church of the Larger Fellowship
June 2015

1. RE-Frigerator Page for families

With featured people from UU history, social justice projects, spiritual practices, ways to practice our principles, questions for family discussion and more, each month the REfrigerator Page provides a pdf document that you can print and keep on your refrigerator as a reminder of ways for kids to connect to UUism, and for parents and religious educators to glean great ideas for religious education.

2. Family Quest can be found at: www.questformeaning.org/programs/family-quest/

- Family Quest You Tube Channel: For Families on a Spiritual Expedition
- Family Quest Pinterest Board
- Parents Facebook Group
- Refrigerator Page: a printable page, appropriate for the refrigerator

3. REsources for Living

- Go to the Quest Monthly page:
www.questformeaning.org/spiritual-reflections/quest-monthly/
- Click on **the current issue**
- Scroll down the page until you see **Resources for Living**

4. CliF Notes

A curriculum for families and small groups



CliF Notes

A curriculum for families and small groups

June 2015

Week One – June 7th
UU and You -- God

Supplies Needed: Enlarged version of Different Ideas About God page (below) and copy of same cut into strips, each with a single idea about God, container to put strips in, paper, pencils, crayons and/or markers

Chalice Lighting:

God enters by a private door into every individual.
-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Or

We are Unitarian Universalists (*shape hands fingers up to form two “Us”*)
This is the home of the open mind (*touch fingers to forehead and open out*)
This is the home of the flaming chalice that lights our way to truth. (*cup hands thumbs out and hold up*)
This is the home of the loving heart (*fold hands over heart*)
This is the home of the helping hands (*hold hands out*)
Together we care for our earth
And work for peace in our world. (*join hands amongst the group*)

Or, for older kids:

In the freedom of truth
and the love of justice
We bring all that we are
to shape what we yet can be.

RE Express Plus, June 2015

from the CLF (Church of the Larger Fellowship)

clf@clfuu.org 617-948-6150

www.clfuu.org & www.QuestForMeaning.org



Check in

You may wish to start this check-in time with the words “We are a family (or community). What touches one of us touches all of us, and so we take this time to listen to each person remember and share one thing from the past week that made a difference in their life – something that made them happy, or sad, or proud or sorry or grateful.

Centering: Sing “Gathered Here” (#389 in *Singing the Living Tradition*)

Gathered here in the mystery of the hour,
Gathered here in one strong body,
Gathered here in the struggle and the power,
Spirit, draw near.

Click [here](#) for the tune.

Introduction:

All this year we've been learning about the major religions of the world, finding out about the beliefs and religious practices of a wide variety of people. For the final month of this curriculum we're going to bring what we've learned back home, and talk about Unitarian Universalism and our own personal beliefs.

This week we'll turn our attention to beliefs about God, or a Higher Power. We've learned that Hindus believe in one God expressed by many gods; that Jews and Muslims believe in one God; that Christians believe in one God, but that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are part of that God; and that Buddhists, at least some of them, don't really have a belief in God. So what about Unitarian Universalists? What do we believe about God? Well, being UU, we believe a bunch of different things

Here's what a bunch of UU young people in one church had to say about God:

Story

Twice upon a time, the religious education leader of a UU church in Portland, Maine, decided to ask the kids in her program what they thought about God. From their answers, she made two different “What Is God?” books. Here is some of what they said:

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From Shannon, age 5, with a picture she drew of squiggly lines: The squiggly lines are the words God told me to say when I closed my eyes to think about her. She also told me to draw a cross. God has lots of words to say.

From Allyson, age 5: I think that God is up in the clouds. I think that he has a long beard.

From Brandon, age 6: Maybe God looks like a tree. God would like us to stop polluting the water.

From Kate, age 7: I think there's a little light of God in everyone. I think God is all the things around us like the sky, the moon, the grass, the trees and the sun and, of course, you always call that nature.

From Lisa, age 8: I think God is a spirit and I think God is our home and the sky and the grass and the trees and the ground. God is everything.

From Taylor, age 9: God is . . . um . . . well . . . I don't really know. It's kind of a secret that only God knows. Basically, God is everything. It's inside us, it's around us. It's everything.

From Sam, age 10: I think the symbol for God is the Yin and the Yang because that symbolizes everything. And I think God is everything.

From Chris, age 11: It doesn't mean anything really.

From Selena, age 11: God is a feeling, an emotion inside of you. Something to believe will get you through danger safely. God is what some call your conscience. God is a spirit inside everyone. The strength of the god is determined on the capability of the person, determined on the faith, luck, and will to believe in themselves and the god. The attitude is also determined on the person, the attitude of the god. Each god of each person is born and dies with the person.

From Emily, age 12: God is like a small seed of creation.

From Brett, age 12: God is within us. It is a spirit buried inside of our bodies.



From Graham, age 13: God is an idea made to solve the unknown. Therefore, think what you want about it.

From Peter, age 13: God is one big face, not really happy or sad, not male or female, and when you get really close, it is made up of a lot of little tiny faces made of many colors.

From Stefan, age 13: God is Everything.

From Evan, age 14: Personally I don't believe in god or any gods. I believe that every person has their own belief and should stick to it.

(from Riddle and Mystery, a curriculum from the UUA's Tapestry of Faith program, at <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/riddle/session4/157118.shtml>)

Activity

We're going to have a try at playing "God Idea Charades." I have a poster here with some different ideas about God listed on it. I also have that poster cut into little strips of paper. Everyone will have a turn to choose a strip of paper and try to act out the God idea that is on that strip. You can look at the poster to get clues about which one the actor is trying to show. (Note: with younger children you will probably just want to pick a few that are easier to portray.)



Different Ideas about God

Agnosticism: Haven't decided whether they think there is a God or not.

Animism: Everything in nature has a soul or mind.

Atheism: There is no God.

Deism: There is a God who created the universe, but who doesn't listen to prayers or change things.

Duotheism: There are two gods, either one male and one female (paganism) or one good and one bad (Zoroastrianism)

Henotheism: There is one God, but many gods and goddesses that show aspects of that God

Monotheism: There is one God.

Pantheism: God is the spiritual essence of everything in the universe.

Polytheism: There are many gods and goddesses

Trinity: There is one God, but that God has three parts or aspects (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)



Discussion

Clearly, there are a lot of different views of God. Do you think it is possible to tell who is right? Do you think it is possible for everyone to be right?

Activity

Have everyone draw and/or write something that depicts their personal ideas about God. Make it clear that drawings can be abstract, showing feelings or impressions rather than a person place or thing. Although a picture of a time that someone felt the presence of God/the Holy would be fine, too.

Closing

Share what participants drew/wrote.

Week Two – June 14th

UU and You – What Happens When We Die?

Supplies Needed: Paper, pencils, crayons and/or markers

Chalice Lighting and Opening Words

Honor the ocean of love.

-- George de Benneville

or

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Spirit draw near.

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Introduction

One of the things that we've talked about with the various world religions is what each believes happens when you die. Hindus believe that you are reincarnated – that your soul comes back in another body, while many ancient religions believe that the spirits of ancestors remain with the family. One of the answers to the question “What happens when you die?” that you often hear is that some people go to heaven and some people go to hell. The Christian and Muslim religions hold this belief. Many Christians believe that people who have accepted Jesus as their savior will go to heaven, a place of eternal joy, while people who have not will go to hell, and suffer for all time after they die. Muslims, also, generally believe that some people (Muslims who have behaved well) will go to a wonderful heaven, while non-Muslims and Muslims who have behaved badly will suffer in hell.



Of course, in any religion there is a lot of variety in what exactly people believe. Some Christians and Muslims would say that heaven and hell are real, literal places where people feel physical pleasure or pain. Others would say that heaven and hell are more of a spiritual state, where those who have lived good lives can enjoy being close to God, while those who have been bad have to remember and reflect on the suffering caused by their actions.

The Universalist part of our Unitarian Universalist name comes from a variation on the Christian beliefs about heaven and hell. Universalists believed that everyone would go to heaven – if not right away, then at least eventually. They said that God has infinite love for all people, and so no one could be permanently separated from God's love. One early Universalist was a man named George de Benneville, who not only came to preach his views that everyone would go to heaven, but who also had his own real-life experience of death (or near-death) and rebirth.

Story

George de Benneville was born in 1703, more than two hundred years ago. He grew up in England, where his father worked in the court of King William. Queen Anne was George's godmother, and it seems that he led a pretty spoiled life. In fact, de Benneville tells in his autobiography of how he was a wild child, who pretty much thought he was better than everybody else.

But a change started to happen in George's life when, at twelve years old, he went with a small fleet of boats from England to Africa's Barbary Coast. He tells the story of watching, as they came to shore, as one of the Black Africans helping to dock the boats was injured badly in the leg. He was annoyed to see the man's co-workers kiss his wound, crying and sobbing over the man. And he was still more annoyed when they cried out loudly toward the rising sun. George asked, presumably with some considerable grumpiness, what these people thought they were doing. He learned that the Moors (as the Black Africans were called) kissed the wound to express their sympathy for the man's suffering, and they cried over him so that the salt water of their tears could clean the wound. They cried out to the sun to ask the Creator to have compassion on their hurt friend and heal him.

It seems that, like the Grinch, George de Benneville's heart grew a few sizes that day. He realized that while he had looked down on these "heathens" who had a different skin color and religion than his, they were actually the ones acting with kindness and caring,



as George's Christian religion taught. George realized that he, in fact, was the "heathen," the one without a true religion, not them.

George returned to his privileged life in England, but something had changed inside him. Unfortunately, he went from one extreme to another. Instead of feeling like he was better than everyone else, George now felt like he was worse. One day, coming home all sweaty from dancing at a ball, George had a vision of himself burning in hell, and came away from the vision in despair, convinced that he was damned forever. His parents called in ministers to convince him that he was really just fine, and hadn't done anything all that bad. However, since the ministers believed that some people were, in fact, destined to go to hell, when he wasn't easily convinced, they figured that he must be right, and just learned at a young age what his destiny was. Needless to say, this wasn't much help to young George.

However, George had another vision. It started with his familiar sense of guilt and doom, but ended with him being redeemed, saved, by the love of God. So George, who was inclined to take these visions literally, figured that he was destined for heaven, not hell. But he also figured that if he was saved by God's love, that everyone else was as well. He became as joyful as he had previously been miserable.

So once again his parents called in the ministers, not trusting his joy any more than his misery. And when the ministers learned that he was now convinced that all people were saved by the love of God, and that no one was going to hell, they threw him out of the church. George, however, was not to be stopped by the disapproval of his parents, the church, or anyone else. At 17 years old, George felt called to go to France to preach the good news of salvation for everyone. Although he knew that he was likely to get into trouble with the authorities, he chose to go anyway. And, no surprise, he got into trouble with the authorities for preaching something contrary to the ideas of the king. He was thrown in prison, but as soon as he got out, he went back to preaching his heretical ideas.

And so it goes for the next 18 years – preaching, hiding out, getting sent to prison, getting out again, at least once within minutes of being beheaded for his ideas. Somewhere in this time he became a doctor. Toward the end of his time in Europe he became extremely ill. He writes in his autobiography: "I felt myself die by degrees, and exactly at midnight I was separated from my body, and saw the people occupied in watching it, according to the custom of the country. I had a great desire to be freed from the sight of my body, and immediately I was drawn up as in a cloud, and beheld great wonders where I passed, impossible to be written or expressed." And he proceeds, for the next 17 pages, to do his best to express what he can of it, including being escorted by "guardians" up to heaven.



The underlying message was a confirmation and a further understanding of what he had been preaching, the good news of “the restoration of all the human species without exception,” salvation for everyone. He came back to life, as it were, and was told that 42 hours had passed, 25 of which he had actually lain in the coffin, as they were certain that he had died. He came back to life with a renewed commitment and passion for his preaching.

There isn’t time to share all the details of George de Benneville’s life, but it’s worth noting that not too much after this vision he moved to American, where he got married, had seven children, practiced medicine, and continued to preach. On friendly terms with local Native American tribes, de Benneville borrowed from them many herbal remedies for treating diseases and tried to understand their languages and symbols. Because he believed all ways of expressing the same truth to be equally valid, he could connect with people across cultures and religions. He thought that taking religious truths literally, rather than symbolically, was the cause of many religious conflicts.

De Benneville thought that, if we listened to our inward spirits, we would know that “behind every appearance of diversity there is an interdependent unity of all things.” Godly love, de Benneville preached, finds its way in spite of, or even because of, outward differences. “That love must be based upon mutual respect for the differences in color, language and worship,” he said. So he continued to preach, and to live out his beliefs through his practice of medicine, until he finally died (permanently) at the age of 90.

Discussion:

If you were George having the vision, what would you hope the guardians would tell you? Would you want to hear all people would eventually go to heaven? Would you want to hear that people who had done terrible things would be punished in hell, at least for a while? What would you want to hear that heaven was like?

Do you think that George de Benneville’s visions really told him something true and important, or do you think that he just had a mental illness which made him have hallucinations, and see and hear things that weren’t really there?

Activity: We’re going to play a game of Death Alternatives Tag. This is how it works. We will start with one person being “It,” the tagger. This person will try to tag other people in the group. However, if you get tagged, you have a choice as to what will happen. If you choose reincarnation then you will become the animal of your choice, and



will move about acting like that animal. If you choose the idea that when we die we simply go back to nature you will lie down and be still. If you choose ancestor worship you will stick around and take over as the person who is “It,” tagging people. And if you choose a Universalist idea that everyone is saved then you will call out “Everyone saved!” and everyone who is lying down or acting like an animal will be released to run around again. (*Note: The leader may choose, at any point, to call out “everyone saved” and choose a new person to be “It,” to help the game continue smoothly.*)

Discussion: Did you choose different things to happen when you were tagged? Why did you choose the way you did? Do you think that maybe people get a choice of what happens to them after they die?

Activity: Invite participants to draw or write about what they think happens when we die.

Closing: Have each person share their drawings/writings about what happens when you die.

Week Three –June 21th UU and You –Ritual

Supplies Needed:

- White glue
- Water
- Colored tissue paper
- Disposable paintbrushes for participants to share
- 18" pipe cleaners in different colors
- Scissors
- Pyrex® custard cups or other wide-mouthed, heat-resistant vessels, approximately one-cup size, for all participants
- Old newspaper
- Votive or tea candles for all participants
- Long matches, or a taper that adult can light that children will use to light candles



Chalice Lighting:

“Worship is the mystery within us reaching out to the mystery beyond.”
-- Jacob Trapp

Or

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Or, for older kids:

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Centering:

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Click [here](#) for the tune.

Intro

We've talked this year about a lot of different ways that people from different religions worship. We've tried the ritual washing and movements that Muslims use in prayer, and we've created objects for a Shinto altar where they worship the Kami, the spirits. We've spun around like the Sufis and meditated like the Buddhists. (You may wish to ask children to share any other rituals or forms of worship they remember from the year.) But how do we, as Unitarian Universalists, worship? What rituals and practices belong to us? How does the mystery inside us reach out to the mystery beyond us? Well, last month we celebrated the flower ceremony, a special ritual for Unitarian Universalists. But there's another ritual practice that's even more common for UUs – lighting the flaming chalice.

Story

Here's a story about the flaming chalice:

Flame of Learning, Chalice of Love

by Janeen Grohsmeyer

(Light a chalice, if there isn't already one lit, and have some matches at hand.)

Have you ever watched a candle burn?

(Lean forward to impart the secret.)

The fire is alive.

Watch it! It moves. It flickers. It dances on the wind. It changes with every breath of air.
(Demonstrate this.)

Fire is alive. It is born. It grows. And it dies.

(Blow out candle.)

But fire is special. It can live again and again.

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(Relight candle and reverently set the chalice someplace where participants can see it.)

People have always known that fire was special. Long, long ago, before people made matches or candles or even made houses, people knew that fire was special. There was the great fire in the sky, the sun, which made the earth warm and made night into day. And there were the smaller fires that people made, fires that cooked their food, and kept them warm, and brought them light.

People honored the fires, because fire was special. Fire was more than human.

Fire has power. It can create, and it can destroy. It can bring light, and it can burn. It can create, and it can destroy. Fire can be wonderful, and fire can be terrible. We have to be careful with fire.

And so, people thought that fire was something sacred and holy. Some people even worshiped fire, and said that fire was a deity, like a goddess or a god. Other people said fire wasn't actually the deity, but just meant that the deity was there.

No matter what they believed, people all over the world gave fire a special place in their religions. They had fires in their homes, of course, to cook food and keep warm, and they also had sacred fires in their temples. They set sacred lamps on their altars. They lit sacred bonfires outside on the hilltops and in the groves. They placed sacred torches near the graves of those who died.

We still do this today. In Washington, DC, near the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, burns an eternal flame that never goes out. In churches at Christmas time, many Christians light four candles on an Advent wreath. During the eight days of Hanukkah, Jews light the eight candles of the menorah. At Diwali, Hindus set small lamps all around the house.

And when Unitarian Universalists gather, we light a chalice. This is our sacred fire. The flame gives light and warmth, just like all fires. It's also a symbol, something we use to represent the light of learning.

The chalice is a symbol, too. A chalice is really just a big cup that you can drink from. When you're thirsty, the nicest thing someone can do is to give you something to drink. Giving a drink to someone is a way of welcoming them to your house. In a way, it means



you're part of the same family, just like everyone here is part of the same family, the Unitarian Universalist family.

The picture of a flame in a chalice was first drawn by a man named Hans Deutsch during World War II for the Unitarian Service Committee. This was before your parents were born. During the war, the committee needed a symbol to show refugees from many different countries that they were there to help them. When refugees saw the picture of the flame in the chalice, it didn't matter what language they spoke. They understood that the symbol stood for help. Unitarian Universalists started to use the flaming chalice in their worship services after that.

Just like the sacred fires, people have used chalices in their religions for thousands and thousands of years. Long ago, the Greeks and Romans put wine in their chalices. Other people have put water or blood or milk, or even melted butter in their chalices. The Celts believed that drinking from the cauldron of the Goddess Ceirdwyn would bring people back to life. Jesus shared a cup of wine with his friends. Many Christians still do this in religious celebrations today.

We Unitarian Universalists don't drink from our chalice. Instead, we use it to hold the flame. The circle of the chalice helps keep the fire small. The flame doesn't blind us. It doesn't burn us. It gives us light, so we can see all the different things in the universe. Even the invisible ones, because the Unitarian Universalist flame is a light of learning.

The circle of our family keeps us warm, both our family at home and our Unitarian Universalist family. We help each other, and we share food and drink with each other, and we take care of each other, because that's what families are supposed to do. And we invite everyone to come be a part of our family, because the Unitarian Universalist chalice is a chalice of love.

The flaming chalice is a symbol of learning and of love. It's our symbol, the symbol of Unitarian Universalism.

(from Creating Home, a Tapestry of Faith curriculum from the UUA, available at <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/home/session2/59338.shtml>)



Activity

Lighting a flaming chalice can be a ritual for any time that you want to focus your attention on those things that are most important to us as Unitarian Universalists – seeking the truth, caring for other people and for our planet, practicing peace and justice. Today each of us is going to make a chalice that looks like stained glass – a reminder that every person and every religion sees life colored in a different way, but the same light shines through all of us.

See above for materials needed. Before you begin you will need to:

- Mix white glue and water mixture — two parts glue to one part water — in small food storage containers.
- Cut colored tissue into small squares.
- Cover work tables with newspaper.

Distribute glue mixture, Pyrex or heat-resistant cups, squares of colored tissue, paint brushes, and pipe cleaners in assorted colors to participants at their work tables.

Invite the children to lightly brush some glue on their individual cups, and begin adding pieces of tissue paper. They may add as many layers of tissue paper as they wish. As participants layer the colors, a stained glass effect will appear. Demonstrate for participants how to brush a layer of glue mixture over each new layer of tissue to smooth it. If you are using measuring cups with red gradient lines, three layers of tissue paper will cover the red lines.

Chalices will dry in about 15 minutes.

Discussion: When might you want to light a chalice? What do you think it means when we light a chalice? Are there other special ways that Unitarian Universalists worship or practice our religion?

Closing

Have each person light a candle in their chalice and say “I light this chalice for _____.” When everyone is done, blow out the flames together. Keep the chalices for use in our final session next week.

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Week Four – June 28th A Closing Celebration

Supplies needed: Two copies of the “Wisdom Slips” below, with one copy intact and one copy cut into component pieces, with the “wisdom” parts folded and placed in a bowl or other container; bowls containing a variety of different items that might go into trail mix such as different kinds of dried fruit, nuts, seeds, pretzels, chocolate chips, etc, a bowl for each participant, slips of paper containing the names of different world religions (can be from the handout above); chalices and means for lighting them from previous session

Chalice Lighting:

"A friendly study of the world's religions is a sacred duty."
-- Mahatma Gandhi

Or

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Introduction

All this year we've been talking about various religions from around the world – what they believe and how they practice their faith. Why do you suppose that we have spent so much time on other people's religions? As Unitarian Universalists we believe that no one person and no one religion can claim to have all truth for all people at all times. The great questions of religion, like “What is the purpose of my life?” “Why do bad things happen?” “What connects us?” “What comes before the beginning and after the end?” are questions that don't have one right answer. So as we seek the truth and try to come to answers that we can believe in, it makes sense to look broadly, and to learn from as many great teachers as we can. How do we know when we are done, when we've got all the answers and wisdom we might need? Here's a story that might be an answer to that question:

Story

Answer Mountain

By Sarah E. Skwire; used with permission. This story appears in *What If Nobody Forgave? and Other Stories* edited by Colleen M. McDonald (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2003).

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For a dramatic storytelling, make signs that say "The Answer Is No," "The Answer Is Yes" and "The Answer Is under Construction." Show each sign when it is mentioned in the story, or engage three participants to each hold up their sign at the appropriate time.

Long ago and far away, or yesterday and just around the corner, or maybe somewhere halfway in between, there was a town that sat, quiet and content, tucked into the shadow of a mountain. And carved on the side of that mountain, big and tall so no one could miss them, were the words, "THE ANSWER IS NO."

No one knew where the words came from or why they were there. They'd just always been there.

But, oh my goodness, the people who lived in that town cuddled into that mountain were glad to have those words there. Because whenever the townspeople had a question, all they had to do was to look up the mountain and read it. The answer was always NO.

Making decisions was very simple, and life went on smoothly and easily in the town cuddled into the mountain . . . until one day. Now, on that particular day, Ma Custus was about to make dinner for her family. And she just couldn't decide — because sometimes you can't — whether to make stew or steak, pasta or potatoes, dumplings or doughnuts, so she went out into the yard.

"Should I make liver for dinner tonight?" she asked, and looked up at the mountain. And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS NO."

"All right. I knew that, really. Nobody is crazy about liver. But should I maybe make steak for dinner? "

And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS NO."

"Should I make chicken? "

And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS NO."

"Should I make tacos or tofu? Baked beans or broccoli? Pork chops or popcorn? "

The mountain said nothing but "THE ANSWER IS NO."



Ma Custus asked more questions until the sun disappeared behind the mountain. She kept on asking questions until the sun came up around the other way. And all the mountain ever said was "THE ANSWER IS NO." Because Ma couldn't get an answer that was any kind of answer, she and her family went all night and all the next day and all the next night without dinner.

Finally, Ma just gave up and made liver anyway — even though the mountain said no, and even though everyone hated liver — because liver was the first thing she'd thought of. But Ma Custus had had enough. She glared at the mountain, stamped her foot, and shook her fist. "Why is the answer always 'NO'? Why can't you just say 'YES' for once?"

Ma turned around and stomped away to ring the town bell and call a town meeting. Well, when that bell rang, the whole town came running. From the oldest man with the longest beard to the youngest kids who still needed carrying, no one would miss a town meeting. They all came, and they all listened carefully as Ma Custus told her story.

"Seems to me," she said, "that we've got a problem. That mountain just isn't helping us like it should. Seems to me it would be nice if it would say 'YES' for a while."

The townsfolk knew Ma Custus had a point, but they didn't much like this idea — changing something that had been the same for so long. But after they thought and then thought some more, they finally nodded solemnly. The mountain would have to be re-carved.

Mason Sharp, the stone carver, nodded along with the rest of them. He scratched his nose, adjusted his cap, and slowly gazed up the length of the mountain.

Then he cleared his throat and said, in his gravelly voice, "Looks to me like I could do the carving, if that's all right with all of you."

And so it was. Mason spent the next two weeks up on the side of the mountain, chiseling and chipping and carving away, and coming down only when it got too dark to see. And when he was done, the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS YES."

Mason rang the bell to call the town together, and once again they all came running. From the oldest woman with the whitest hair to the youngest kids who still needed



carrying, they all wanted to see the new sign, and they all wanted to cheer for the stone carver and all his hard work.

Ma Custus, who had started all of this, came right up to the front of the crowd. She figured she ought to be the person to ask the first question of this new and different mountain, since she'd discovered the problem with the old one. She stepped right up to the foot of the mountain, looked way up to the top, and asked, "Should I make liver for dinner tonight?"

And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS YES." Well, now, Ma Custus almost fell over with surprise. "But Pa Custus told me he'd never forgive me if I served liver again, and all my kids threatened to hide in the barn for a week. Should I really serve liver?"

And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS YES."

The townspeople began to grumble. They didn't like the sound of this. Ma Custus's family grumbled the loudest.

"But, well, I can't," Ma said. "I mean, I just can't serve liver again. I promised I wouldn't!"

"Are you telling me I should break my promise?"

The mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS YES."

The grumbling got louder. And Ma Custus, well, she glared at the mountain again, stamped her foot and shook her fist, and she turned to the townspeople and said, "This just isn't right! This just can't be right! What are we going to do?"

Once again, the townsfolk put on their thinking caps. Everyone thought: Ma Custus, Pa Custus, and all the Custus kids (who probably thought the hardest of all, because they were worried about the liver — very worried). Finally, the smallest but one of the Custus kids piped up.

"Why does there have to be just one answer? Can't we have more?"

The townspeople gasped. No one had ever thought of such a thing before. They mumbled and grumbled and talked among themselves. Finally they decided that the mountain



ought to say, "THE ANSWER IS SOMETIMES YES AND SOMETIMES NO AND SOMETIMES WAIT AND SEE AND SOMETIMES I JUST DON'T KNOW."

Mason the stone carver, who had been listening to all of this talk, cleared his throat, scratched his nose, adjusted his cap, and said, "I think I can do it. I don't mind — not really — even if I did just finish carving in the new change. But, well, it's going to take a lot of time, and I can't work all day long like I did the last time. How about if I work on it when I can, and we'll hang us up some kind of sign on the mountain that lets people know that the answer is coming?"

And so it was.

The funny thing was that, for a little while, Mason worked on the mountain every day. And for a little while, everyone in town waited eagerly to see the new answer. But soon, the stonemason got tired of climbing the mountain every day and everyone else got tired of waiting, and they all started asking each other questions and helping everyone else find answers that seemed to fit. The townspeople realized that different questions usually had different answers, that sometimes the same question had more than one answer, and that there were many more answers than they had imagined. And all of that was fine with them.

After a while they thought that maybe the answer the mountain was giving them right then, just as it was, was better and more sensible than any other answer it had given. And so they left it as it was.

And the mountain said, "THE ANSWER IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION."

(From Toolbox of Faith, a Tapestry of Faith curriculum from the UUA, available online at <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/toolbox/session4/109542.shtml>)

Discussion

What do you think it means that “the answer is under construction”? Was the mountain a good place to look for answers? Where do you think *are* good places to look for answers?



Activity

Way back in September we played a game that involved matching up answers, or bits of wisdom, with the religions that they belong to. We're going to play a different version of that game today, and see what we might remember about some of the different religions we've talked about this year. Just to keep it exciting, and to remind us that there is always more to learn, we're going to include a couple of religions we haven't much talked about as well.

We're going to line up slips with the names of a bunch of different religions across the floor. Everyone will line up across the room from where the religion names are. I'll choose a player who will take one of these folded slips of paper and read out the piece of wisdom that is written on it. When I say "go" everyone will run across the room and try to pick up the name of the religion that they think goes with the piece of wisdom that was just read. The first person to get ahold of the correct religion and call it out wins the round and becomes the next person to read out a piece of wisdom. If that winner has already read a piece of wisdom and others haven't, then the winner of the round chooses who will read next.



Wisdom Slips

(Leader should keep the entire copy to be able to determine which player is correct, and cut up another copy so that there are slips with the names of religions to place at one end of the room, and slips with bits of wisdom folded and placed in a bowl or other container for players to read out. For the leader's purposes, the name of the religion follows the relevant piece of wisdom.)



God is both inside you and beyond you, and can be imagined in many different forms.

Hindu

Suffering comes from being attached to how you think the world should be.

Buddhist

Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.

Jewish

Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

Christian

Nature is full of spirit.

Shinto



Do not struggle, but flow with the natural order of life.

Taoism

There is no god but God.

Islam

Serve God by living a brave, disciplined life.

Sikh

Practice unlimited compassion toward all beings

Jain

All humankind is one.

Baha'i

Do as you wish, so long as you cause no harm

Wicca

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from the CLF (Church of the Larger Fellowship)

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www.clfuu.org & www.QuestForMeaning.org



You don't need to believe in God to be good.

Humanist



Discussion

After the game is concluded, spend a few minutes on each religion remembering what you have learned about it in the course of the year.

Activity

Have several bowls, each containing an item that might go into trail mix – different kinds of dried fruit, nuts, seeds, chocolate chips, etc. In front of each bowl put the name of a religion (you may wish to use the slips from the game above). Give each participant a bowl. Invite each person to take a pinch or small handful from each bowl. As they take from the bowl they should say something that they take from the religion whose name is in front of the bowl. For instance, a person might say “I take loving your neighbor as yourself” as they took items from the bowl marked Christianity or “I take meditation” from the bowl marked Buddhism. You may wish to model how this works by going first. Don’t worry if children echo what you said, or repeat what others have said. If they have difficulty coming up with anything, you might wish to remind them of things they might admire about various religions, such as yoga being connected with Hinduism and giving to the poor being a part of Islam.

Closing

Have each person light the stained glass chalice they made the previous week and share a piece of wisdom of their own – something they personally think is true and important.