



# JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO COMMUNITY SCIENCE

## This lesson's Big Ideas:

- An important unit in human community is the family.
- Unitarian Universalism celebrates and affirms many different types of families.
- Love is what bonds a group of people together as a family.

## Lesson Materials

- One teacher with 1-4 YouTube videos about animal families open and cued up in separate browser tabs, ready to share the screen
- Three wooden or Lego blocks (or other distinct items) in three different colors that can be held up in front of your video camera easily
- One teacher with the Tally Sheet open (linked under this lesson on the Teacher Resources page) ready to share and annotate.
- One teacher with this document open and ready to share the image on page 6.

## TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

A child and parent were walking along a road when they came across a large stone. The child said to the parent, "Do you think if I use all my strength, I can move this rock?" The parent answered, "If you use all your strength, I am sure you can do it." The child began to push the rock with every ounce of energy available. The child pushed and pushed, but the rock did not move. Discouraged, the little one said to the parent, "You were wrong. I can't do it." The parent placed an arm around the child's shoulder and said, "No, love. You didn't use all your strength – you didn't ask me to help."

- adapted from D. Wolpe's

*Teaching Your Children About God*

The family. We were a strange little band of characters trudging through life sharing diseases and toothpaste, coveting one another's desserts, hiding shampoo, borrowing money, locking each other out of our rooms, inflicting pain and kissing to heal it in the same instant, loving, laughing, defending, and trying to figure out the common thread that bound us all together.

-Erma Bombeck

You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them.

-Desmond Tutu

Family life is full of major and minor crises ~ the ups and downs of health, success and failure in career, marriage, and divorce ~ and all kinds of characters. It is tied to places and events and histories. With all of these felt details, life etches itself into memory and personality. It's difficult to imagine anything more nourishing to the soul.

- Thomas Moore

## CHECK-IN

🕒 5-10 minutes

Allow one of the teachers to lead the group in a name game, an icebreaker, a get-to-know-you questions, or a simple ‘How are things?’ moment. Spend more time if the group seems eager to connect with each other. Light the chalice and say:

“We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith, the light of truth, and the warmth of love.”

## COVENANT

🕒 3 minutes

Review the discussion of how the group wants to be together. Update the notes, if necessary. Save the covenant for future classes.

- Share this document on your screen, if you can.

## GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 3-5 minutes

Lots of animals live in groups. Do you know what we call whole groups of the following animals? Guess!? What do you call a group of...

- |                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| • Cows (herd)     | And they get weirder...  |
| • Geese (flock)   | • Squirrels (scurry)     |
| • Fish (school)   | • Porcupines (prickle)   |
| • Wolves (pack)   | • Coyotes (band)         |
| • Lions (pride)   | • Peacocks (ostentation) |
| • Whales (pod)    | • Ravens (unkindness)    |
| • Ants (colony)   | • Giraffes (tower)       |
| • Buffalo (gang)  | • Monkeys (barrel)       |
| • Leopards (leap) | • Kangaroos (mob)        |

What groups do people come in? Families? Congregations? Neighborhoods? Nations? Which do you think is most important to belong to?

Many people think of family as the basic group that people need most. So we could say ‘geese come in flocks’, ‘coyotes come in bands’ and ‘people come in families’. UUs affirm and celebrate all kinds of families.

## PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE ANIMAL ATLAS: FAMILY TIME

🕒 20 minutes

Let’s talk about some animal families to start. Here are a bunch of YouTube videos about different animal families. One teacher should have 2-4 of them cued up (after the ads) in different tabs in a browser and be ready to share their screen. After the clips, invite the children to discuss the following questions:

[And Tango Makes Three by Justin Richardson](#) (video runs 4:12 and has no intro) - This is a true story about two male penguins in the Central Park Zoo that were given an egg that would not be cared for and raised their chick together. Good for all ages. (Michelle loves this story!)

[Animal Families by National Geographic](#) (video runs 1:54 and has a very brief intro) - This is about several animals that live in family groups. It briefly describes lion, meerkat, and gorilla families. Very simple, better for younger kids.

[Animal Parents by Socratica Kids](#) (video runs 12:31 with no intro) - This is a longer video with some detail about each animal family that is discussed. After opening, the first animal family shown is elephants, orangutans begin at 2:21, ducks at 4:25, kangaroos at 6:42, penguins at 8:47, seahorses at 10:58. This video has enough detail that it is better suited to older kids. Feel free to watch a portion or two for younger kids.

[Best Animal Moms Ever compilation by The Dodo](#) (video runs 6:36 with no intro) - This is a compilation of lots of brief clips of animal parents protecting or caring for their young in different ways. Opens with a giraffe chasing lions away from her child, 0:19 elephant chases hyenas away from her young, 1:13 momma bear grabs her cub away from the highway, 1:21 mother wallaby helps her youngster, 2:00 a mother trumpeter swan helps her brood climb onto her back, 2:50 otters snuggling, 3:14 mother buffalo fighting off a group of lions, 3:33 baby blue whale nursing, 4:07 octopus eggs guarded by mother, 4:32 cow worried about her calf, 5:13 mother helps stuck baby elephant, 5:43 mother dog sharing pups with human caregiver. Good for all ages and good food for conversation.

- What did the animal families do that was like what human families do?
- What did the animal families do that was different from what human families do?
- Do all animal families have two animal parents?
- Do you believe that the animal families love each other? If not, what else might they feel that makes them care for their families?
- What are some things that make your family feel close?
- How do scientists find out more about animal families?
- How do we find out more about human families?

## **PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO PERMUTATIONS! (MILLIONS OF POSSIBLE FAMILIES)**

🕒 15-20 minutes

A permutation is one of a set of possible combinations or ways to put multiple things together. We can do some easy combinations and permutations with these three colored blocks (or pens or fruits or other item in three different colors). If I had to figure out how many different ways I could hold up a block or blocks for you to see, how many combinations could we think of...? First we could have just one block. Then two blocks in pairs. How many different pairs are there? How many groups of three?

Families come in lots of possible combinations and permutations, too! Some people think that pretty much the only 'right' family permutation looks like this: mom, dad, child, child. Unitarian Universalists recognize all the different combinations of people who come together to love each other and be a family. We think that the only 'rule' that applies to permutations of families is LOVE.

How many different permutations of the human family are there?! Let's explore!

- How many different family relationships can you think of? Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, Aunt, Uncle, Cousin, Grandparent. What about Friend or Neighbor?
- How many different types of Parent can there be? "ADOPTIVE", "STEP", "FOSTER," "HALF," and "BIOLOGICAL" are all descriptors that kids can use in brainstorming about families. Note that the nomenclature that kids use will often be from a child's perspective of different family members, but encourage kids to point out other kinship ties (take a second to point out that a boy can be both brother and son).
- You can choose to stick to conversation about all the different family possibilities that you can all think of. To add some depth to the conversation, given time and technical abilities, one teacher can open the Tally Sheet linked with this lesson on the Teacher Resources page and share it on their screen. You can use the Annotate feature in Zoom to mark rectangles on the grid to keep track of the different family permutations that your group comes up with. Or one teacher could open up Whiteboard or a Word document and take notes on the permutations that your group thinks up.
- Families should be *realistic* (8 stepfathers and one child is probably not the most realistic family) but we must remain open to many different types of families (three foster brothers may be a family unto themselves).
- For younger kids or for visual expression of the ideas we are talking about, share this document on your screen showing page 6. You can zoom in or out and talk about what relationships might be illustrated in the 30 different family permutations shown.

Examples of Possible Families:

- 1 Biological Dad, 1 Stepmom, 1 Biological Brother, 1 Biological Sister
- 2 Moms, 1 Adopted Brother (Son or Grandson), 1 Biological Brother (Son or Grandson)
- 1 Mom, 2 Daughters
- 1 Grandma, 1 Grandpa, 1 Grandchild
- 1 Dad, 1 Biological Child, 1 Aunt, 1 Cousin

That's five different permutations of family already. How many more might there be?

NOTE: You may need to check and supplement the kids' understanding of the ideas of *biological children*, *foster children*, *half siblings* and some other intricacies of human families. Gently encourage children to share details about their own families that might clarify relationships. It may not be necessary to include these descriptors in every permutation, especially when working with younger groups.

### Wondering Together

- I wonder how many possible permutations of families there are in the universe?
- I wonder which permutation represents your family?
- Can a kid be part of more than one of these possible families? Can an adult? What happens when parents divorce and remarry?
- I wonder what all of these different families have in common?
- What we could say to someone who felt that one of the families on our tally sheet didn't count as a family?
- Are there other family members that should be on this chart to make our permutations even more inclusive of real families?
- Do you need a grown-up in the permutation for it to be a family? Why do you agree or disagree?
- How can our church show that we welcome and celebrate all families?
- How can our church help families take care of themselves and each other?

## **CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING**

🕒 3 minutes

Share this page on one teacher's screen. Join hands in a circle (by having everyone hold their hands up at the edge of the view of their camera) or ask everyone to assume a comfortable, meditative position. Speak these words, or words like them, the children repeating each line after you.

May all families grow strong,  
Like trees rooted deep in love,  
Like trees that reach toward the light,  
Like trees that bear fruits that nourish all people.  
May all families grow strong.

Unlight the chalice, saying: though we extinguish the light of the chalice here, we know that the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.



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