



JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO COMMUNITY STORY

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

- This document open to the final page, ready to be shared on a screen (optional)
- One teacher with Zoom's whiteboard or a blank Word document open to record the story in Activity One.
- One teacher ready to call on kids and look up which story elements on page 5 correlate with random numbers between 1 and 6
- One teacher with 2-5 YouTube videos about families open and cued up in separate browser tabs, ready to share the screen

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

🕒 2-3 minutes

Can the kids name a main character’s family members from the following books and movies?

- Cinderella
- Harry Potter
- Lion King
- Star Wars
- Goldilocks
- Hansel and Gretel
- The Little Mermaid

PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE

SO MANY POSSIBILITIES: RANDOM FAMILY TALES

🕒 10-15 minutes

This lesson works best if one teacher manages the flow of the activity and another teacher types or writes down the words of the story as the activity progresses. Ideally, everyone will have microphones on so that they can quickly respond when their name is called. The last page of this lesson has a numbered list of story elements. Elements 1 and 8 will be the same no matter what number is called out, so skip them if that helps keep things moving. You will work with the kids and random numbers to create a story about an imaginary family. Encourage embellishment, inviting volunteers to supply you with names, adjectives, and details about the people and homes featured in each random story.

The teacher managing the flow will call kid’s names so they call out a number between 1-6, then read the element corresponding to that number so that the teacher recording the story can write it down. Ask a particular child for details, write them down, then call a name for the next number. When the 8 elements are written or typed, read the story through for the class.

As an example, let's say the kids call out these numbers in the following order:

2. **Once upon a time**
3. **there was a person** ("Bobbie, describe the person for us...")
5. **who fell in love with a woman** ("Mackenzie, add some details about this woman...")
2. **and moved into a house** ("Chris, what was their house like...?")
1. **and decided to adopt a child** (etc...)
6. **and decided not to have more children** (etc...)
1. **and then a Grandparent moved in** ("I wonder why? Who's got an idea?")
4. **and lived for many years in a home filled with love.**

You get this story: "Once upon a time there was a smart, kind man named Burt who fell in love with a lovely, creative woman named Alice. They moved into a tiny house in Inver Grove Heights. After a while, they decided to adopt a boy from Ethiopia who was named Malik. Then, Grandpa got too old to live all alone so he moved in with Burt and Alice and Malik and they all lived for many years in a home filled with love. The End."

There are many options inherent in the story elements, including divorce, single parents, same-sex couples, gender neutral persons, and no children. Be prepared to gently affirm with the children that these realities and choices don't change the familial bonds between people. Love is what makes a group of people into a family.

Wondering Together

- I wonder what parts of this family's story are like your own story?
- I wonder if there's a family here at Unity whose story is pretty much like this?
- I wonder what things didn't happen in this story but happen in real families?
- I wonder what makes this family a family?
- I wonder what was the best part about family for Burt? For Malik? For Grandpa?
- I wonder why it's so important that our church and other UU churches welcome and celebrate all kinds of families?

If the group really enjoys this, invite them to draw out a second story and embellish it. The stories in the second activity vary in length or can be passed up to continue this activity.

PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO

STORYBOOK SHARING

🕒 15-20 minutes

In the classroom, we would have had many titles from the **Families All Matter Book Project**, a curriculum that affirms and celebrates all kinds of families and introduces readers to such important issues as interracial relations, adoption, divorce, mental illness, socioeconomic challenges, gender identity, and death of a family member. Here is a list of YouTube videos of books from the Unity RE collection that you can choose from. One teacher should have a few selected stories cued up in tabs in their web browser to share with the class. If teachers have favorite stories about families, feel free to read them to the class and hold up pictures to your camera. Let children know that they can either sit up at the computer and watch the pictures as the stories are read or they can lean back and relax and imagine pictures in their minds. Take a few minutes to talk about the stories after hearing them, using the following Wondering questions to start the conversation.

[The Family Book by Todd Parr](#) (video runs 1:55 and has no intro to skip) - This is a fun, bright, simple book full of ways that families can be different as well as ways that families are all similar. Good for all ages.

[Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce by Cornelia Maude Spelman](#) (video runs 5:19, start 11 seconds in to skip the intro) - This book is about a child who has favorite people and things and then finds out that her parents will get divorced. The child goes through some grief with the change but learns that her parents love her and will continue to be in her life as always. Good for all ages.

[Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born by Jamie Lee Curtis](#) (video runs 3:36, no real intro) - This is a cheerful book from the perspective of a child who was adopted, asking parents to tell the story of their family coming together again (and again). Good for all ages.

[Families by Meredith Tax](#) (runs 8:23, no intro) - This is a book told from the perspective of a 6-year-old child who lives with her mother in New York City and visits her father in Boston. She talks about her friends' families and things that she notices that are the same and different about them all. Good for all ages.

[A Tale of Two Daddies by Venita Oelschlager](#) (runs 2:25, no intro) - This book is a rhyming conversation between a child with two dads and a friend with many questions about which parent helps with what. Good for all ages.

Wondering Together

Gather together before the end of the workshop session to reflect together.

- What was your favorite thing about the family in the book you/we read?
- I wonder which book you really liked? What was great about it?
- I wonder if any of these stories are about families like your own?
- I wonder if you hear stories like these at school?
- I wonder what might happen if someone tried to argue that the family in your story wasn't really a family?
- I wonder what you're learning and deciding about what makes a group of people a family?
- I wonder if there are any families at our church whose story is like the one in the book?
- I wonder why our church thinks it's so important to welcome a family like the one in the book?

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.

Random Story Elements

- 1** 1-6 **Once upon a time...**
- 2** 1, 4 **there was a woman...**
2, 5 **there was a man...**
3, 6 **there was a person...**
- 3** 1, 4 **who fell in love with a man...**
2, 5 **who fell in love with a woman...**
3 **who fell in love with a person...**
6 **who was happy without another grown up**
- 4** 1, 4 **and moved into an apartment**
2, 5 **and moved into a house**
3, 6 **and moved to a farm**
- 5** 1, 4 **and decided to adopt a child**
2, 5 **and had a baby**
3 **and decided not to have children**
6 **and got a dog**
- 6** 1 **and then got divorced and lived in different houses**
2, 4 **and decided to adopt a child**
3, 5 **and had a baby**
6 **and decided not to have more children**
- 7** 1 **and then a Grandparent moved in**
2 **and then welcomed a foster child into their home**
3 **and decided to adopt a child**
4 **and had a baby**
5 **and got a cat**
6 **and decided not to have more children**
- 8** 1-6 **and lived for many years in a home filled with love.**