



Soul Matters

The Gift of
Liberating Love

RE Resources
Second - Fifth Grade
January 2024

Contents

Welcome to The Gift of Liberating Love!	2
Calendar Connections	3
Session A: Love Pulls Us	4
Session B: Love Pulls Us Up Stream	12
Session C: Love Pulls Us Back to The Table	20
Session D: Love Pulls Us Toward Self-Acceptance	29
Soul Work Table Activities	40

Welcome to The Gift of Liberating Love!

Welcome to the Soul Matters RE Packet for Second through Fifth Grades for the month of January!

This year's overarching frame is *The Gifts of Our Faith*. We focus on ten beloved UU values and explore their potential to shape us and, in turn, shape the world.

Click [HERE](#) to read a bit more about the strategies we are using in our RE packets to engage our RE children with the UUA's proposed new Article II values and inspirations statement.

This month, we explore the Article II value of Love. The A2 commission has placed love at the center of our faith and holds up the idea that *we draw from our heritages of freedom, reason, hope, and courage, building on the foundation of love*. Here is the [wording](#) that was added:

"Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love."

With all this in mind, this January packet explores ***The Gift of Liberating Love***. We offer four sessions. Each session includes an exploration of how love liberates us by pulling us toward wholeness, healing and connection:

Session A: Love Pulls Us

Session B: Love Pulls Us Up Stream

Session C: Love Pulls Us Back To The Table

Session D: Love Pulls Us Toward Beauty

We are excited to use the concept of magnets as all the Gift Box reflection objects this month and to highlight how, like a magnet, our faith calls or pulls us toward actionable or liberating love. The idea of liberating love vs comforting love might be confusing for children, so this month, we are excited to offer a different take on the Introduction and Gift Box section as a way of explaining it! Sessions 2-4 will all have a short story and an object lesson to help give kids a visual way of understanding how liberating love can show up in our lives!

Each story and object lesson can also be used as the Time for All Ages if you wish to share the message with your whole congregation.

Finally, we hope you experience the same pull toward love's liberating power, which draws us inward so we can feel that ever-present love that will not let us go and draws us outward to mend all that divides us.

April Rosario, on behalf of the entire [Soul Matters Team](#).

***To read more about our approach to this year's 2023-2024 RE packets, visit our ["Welcome to Soul Matters RE" Google Doc](#).*

Calendar Connections

January 2024

Monthly Theme: The Gift of Liberating Love

Interfaith:

- [Twelfth Night](#) (Christian) - Jan. 5
- [Epiphany](#) (Christian) - Jan. 6
- [World Religion Day](#) (Baha'i) - Jan. 21, 2024
- [Tu B'Shevat](#) (Jewish) - Jan 24-25, 2024 (more [here](#))
- Birthday of [Thomas Merton](#) - Jan. 31 (1915) (more [here](#) and [here](#))

Unitarian Universalist:

- [Thirty Days of Love](#) - Side with Love Campaign - Jan.15 - Feb.14
- [Millard Fillmore's](#) Birthday - Jan. 7, 1800 (Unitarian President; on his contradictions [here](#))
- [Joseph Tuckerman's](#) Birthday - Jan. 18 (1778) (more [here](#))

National & Cultural:

- [New Year's Day](#) - Jan. 1
- The Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln - Jan. 1 (1863)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - Jan. 15, 2024, third Monday of January (connections [here](#) and [here](#))
- [Rowe vs. Wade](#) Anniversary - Jan. 22 (more [here](#))
- International Holocaust ([Shoah](#)) [Remembrance Day](#) - Jan. 27

For Fun and On the Fringe:

- [National Hug Day](#) - Jan.21
- [I'm Not Going To Take it Anymore](#) Day - Jan. 7th
- [Belly Laugh Day](#) - Jan. 24 (more [here](#) and [here](#))

Session A:

Love Pulls Us

Theme Angle

The theme of the month is The Gift of Liberating Love. In this session, we explore the differences between comforting love, the type of love that feels good and allows us to feel safe, love that is offered through hugs and smiles and high-fives from family and friends (the kind of love that children are probably most familiar with), and liberating love, the kind of love that pulls us to take action or make choices.

This first session is an excellent time to explain that this month, we are exploring the Article II value of Love. The A2 commission has placed love at the center of our faith and holds up the idea that *we draw from our heritages of freedom, reason, hope, and courage, building on the foundation of love*. Here is the [wording](#) that was added:

“Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of Love.”

To help you lift this up, we’ve added a “Blue Box note” into the Gift Box section with suggested words to use.

Light It!

Leader Note: This year, we have created a [Google Doc](#) to crowdsource our favorite Chalice Lightings! Please [share](#) the words and links to your favorite Chalice Lightings.

Extinguish It!

Signal the end of “Chalice time” with a short ritual for extinguishing the chalice. It might be just after any of the below sections or at the end of the session. Use a [candle snuffer](#) if you use real candles for dramatic effect, or just blow it out. We offer the following words for extinguishing the chalice, but there also are resources for other chalice extinguishing words in this [Google Doc](#):

Katie’s Words*

*We gather the light of truth, the warmth of love, and the energy of action into our hearts.
Back into the world of do and say,
Carry it forward into the dawning day.
Go Now in Peace, Amen.*

** (Move your arms to express the actions: gather using a cupping motion from the flame of the chalice to your heart, spread that outward again.)*

Introduce It!

The Gift Box!

(Formally Known as The Wonder Box)

Leader Note: We suggest [buying](#) or [creating](#) a gift box as your wonder box for this section, as a visual representation of this year's overarching theme: "The Gifts of our Faith." The Gift Box and the item inside can be used to help kids make the connection that the values of our faith are gifts we are called to both give and receive, just as we do with a gift or present. The Gift Box and the item(s) inside can be used as an object lesson during a Time for All Ages or as the opening to your RE group.

Love Pulls Us

(Leader notes in the suggested script will be noted with [purple font](#) and italics.)

Reflection Object: a heart-shaped [magnet](#) *(this is a set of 30 wooden magnets; place one in the Gift Box and save the rest for a project outlined later in this lesson)*

Introduction

This year, we will be exploring many values that are important to us UUs. They are like gifts our faith gives to us and asks us to give to the world. It's just like presents for a birthday party! So, our wonder box this year has been transformed into a gift box to help us explore that each week. This month we explore **The Gift of Liberating Love.**

We have been talking a lot about how our religion is considering replacing our 7 principles with a new set of 7 values. Values that will help lead us so we can better live in and serve today's world. One of those values is Love. In fact, our faith sees Love as such an important value of our religion that we have made sure to not only lift it up by name but also place it in the center of our newly proposed Values. *[Show the [A2 Values Image found on page 2](#)].* The A2 commission has placed love at the center of our faith to remind us and hold up the idea that we are *building on the foundation of love.*

Here is the [wording](#) that was added:

"Love is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another."

Reveal

So, with that in mind, what is the gift in today's Gift Box? *(open the box and pull out the heart-shaped magnet.)* It's a heart magnet!

Question

What gift could this heart magnet be about? *(Pause to allow time for the children to answer.)*

This heart magnet is in the Gift Box to remind us that our UU faith doesn't just lift up comforting love but also lifts up and affirms liberating love.

Theme Connection

Comforting and Liberating are both big words, so let's use this heart magnet to explain what I mean.

If we pretend it is just a regular wooden heart for a moment, what might it represent or remind you of?
(Pause to allow time for the children to answer.)

Hearts can remind us of hugs and cuddles and smiles and high-fives from friends and family. These are all examples of comforting love, the kind of love that makes us feel good and safe.

Now, let's imagine for a moment that it is just a magnet; what does a magnet do? *(Pause to allow time for the children to answer.)*

Magnets pull things toward it. So, our heart magnet represents a love that pulls us toward others and into the world, to help liberate - or free - them from sadness, pain or injustice.

Call to Action

So, for today's session, we are going to explore some ways that Liberating Love pulls us out into the world to do good for and help others. to do more. So, are you ready to do that?! Great! Let's begin!

Tell It and Talk About It!

Leader Note: Our Tell It section offers two choices: a Picture Book and a “Tellable Tale” (often also called a wisdom tale or sacred story). We suggest you pick the one that fits your storytelling style best. **Picture books** are great for those who are more comfortable reading a story and have the ability to project slides of the pictures.

Tellable Tales are great for those who like to incorporate the tradition of oral storytelling and are best done when they are memorized.

Our Tell It and Talk About It section can be used during your Time for All Ages or as the opening to your RE groups. If you use this section as your Time for All Ages, we suggest holding the group questions (the *Talk About It* portion) until you are in your RE space.

Oral Storying Telling Tips:

- <https://twowritingteachers.org/2014/04/06/a-mini-crash-course-on-oral-storytelling/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsLTvVn-Hlk>

Tellable Tale: A Lamp in Every Corner

Suggested Introductory Words

“Our theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love. This story tells of how a community transformed itself, building a church with the efforts of many individuals and ultimately lighting the new building with glowing flames from candles held by all the people who contributed. This story is one way of understanding how love pulls us to work together and helps us build a foundation. Are you ready? Let’s begin.”

A Lamp in Every Corner: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/miracles/session-6/lamp>

Reflection Prompts

- What surprised you about this story?
- What lesson do you think the story wants us to remember?
- Suppose you were Zora, with one small job to do to build the church. How would it feel to see the whole community inside the finished building, illuminated by the shared light of everyone’s individual lamp?
- Have you ever sat in the sanctuary or chapel by yourselves or walked through a common space, such as the social hall, when no one else was around? What does it feel like to be alone there? How is it different to be there in a group?

Picture Book: Swimmy, by Leo Lionni

Suggested Introductory Words

“Our theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love, and today we are exploring that theme by reading a story about a little fish that helps its community come together with ingenuity and teamwork so they can overcome any danger. This is a great story to help us think about how a love for others pulls us toward ways we can join together to feel safe and freedom from fear.

Book: [HERE](#) **Read-Aloud:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcc-AkC9CsQ> (3:48 min)

Reflection Prompts

- What surprised you about this story?
- What lesson do you think the story wants us to remember?
- In this story, Swimmy reminded all the fish that together, they could liberate themselves from fear. Have you ever joined forces with others to overcome fear?

Explore It!

(Activities & Games for Experiential Learning)

*Here are a variety of suggestions for digging deeper into the theme. We suggest that you.
Pick 2 activities that you feel best suit the needs and interests of your group.*

Activities

Decorate Wooden Heart Magnets

This activity works with any number of kids.

Set-Up

- Gather and set out Sharpie markers, [sticky gems](#), and [wooden heart magnets](#).

Suggested Introductory Words

“Our theme for this month is the Gift of Liberating Love, and today we are exploring how Liberating love is a kind of love that acts like a magnet and pulls us toward action. For this activity, we are going to decorate heart magnets to bring home and place on our fridges as reminders for our whole family that our faith is built on a foundation of love that pulls us and draws us into the world to help others..”

Directions

- Pass out heart magnets and art supplies to kids.

Theme Exploration Questions

- What are some of the things or actions that love pulls you towards?
- How does love hold you together with the people in your life?

Suggested Ending Words

“As we make choices each day, may our hearts pull us in the direction of love. .”

Foundation of Love Chalice

This activity works with any number of kids.

Set-Up

Gather and set out paper plates, multi-colored self-hardening clay or modeling dough, carving tools or toothpicks, smocks (oversized, old T-shirts are a good substitute), battery-operated tea lights, and newspapers or drop cloths.

Suggested Introductory Words

“As UUs, many of us claim the chalice as the symbol of our faith and love as the foundation.

As we saw during our Gift Box introduction, the A2 commission created an image of the new values that have a chalice with an overlay of the word love over the flame at the center of the newly proposed values.[\[Show the A2 Values Image found on page 2\].](#)

Why do you think the folks the drew this image might have chosen to put the chalice in the center? Because love is at the heart of all that our faith calls us to do. Another way of saying that is to say the Love is at the center of our faith.

What is at the center of our chalice? *(Pause to allow time for the children to answer.)* A flame!

What do you think a flame and love have in common? *(Pause to allow time for the children to answer.)* Well a flame can keep you warm in the cold and help make a path visible in the dark. Can love do those things? *(Pause to allow time for the children to answer.)* How so? *(Pause to allow time for the children to answer.)*

The chalice is just another symbol for how our faith calls us and pulls us to love a

Today, we are going to make chalices with a representation of Love at their centers and on their foundations to bring into our homes as a reminder of this beautiful faith that we belong to.

Directions

- Have kids write their names on a paper plate and then use the clay to sculpt a chalice that will fit a battery-operated tea light.
- Once done, set it on the paper plate and let it air dry.

Suggested Ending Words

“As we make choices each day, may we remember to make them with love in mind.”

Games

Pull of Love

This activity is designed for groups of 3+ kids.

Set-Up

A thick rope- the length of the rope depends on the size of the group.

Suggested Introductory Words

“This game is called “Pull of Love.” The goal is to pull together and help everyone rise together as a team. OK, let’s begin...”

Directions

- Have the group sit in a circle.
- Tie the rope together to make a large loop, slightly smaller than the circle of people. Place the rope inside the circle in front of their feet, and have everyone hold on.
- Tell them that the goal is to get everybody to a standing position by pulling on the rope without touching the floor with their hands.
- Variation: “The Yurt Circle.” Start standing in a tight circle. Hold onto the rope (or each other’s hands) and lean out. Notice how each individual affects the whole group’s effort.

Theme Connection Questions

- What was the hardest part of that game?
- Remember, today, we are exploring how love pulls us towards good things. What was it like deciding when and how much to pull the rope to make sure you were helping and not hurting the group?

Suggested Closing Words

“As we make choices each day, may we remember to make them with love in mind.”

The Human Pyramid - Foundations of Love

This game is designed for groups of 3+

Set-Up

Optional: Tumbling mats

Suggested Introductory Words

"We have been talking today about how our faith calls us to put Love at the center of all we do. Another way our faith talks about this is to say that "love is the foundation of our faith." Can anyone tell me what a foundation is? *(Pause to allow time for the children to answer.)* A foundation is what something is built on that helps keep it steady and strong. Love is what our faith is built on and what helps keep us strong. That being said, it takes work to build and keep a foundation steady and strong. Our next game is a great example of that. Ready? Let's begin."

Directions

- Explain to the group that those who are comfortable are going to work together to make a human pyramid, but first, they need some safety guidelines:
- Keep your arms and legs vertical to give your body and the pyramid for maximum support.
- Communicate with each other.
- Give the group a safety word, such as "STOP." Tell the children that if anyone is in pain or becomes afraid, they may call out the safety word, and the others will immediately dismantle the pyramid.
- Encourage teams to use creativity so everyone of all abilities can take part in making the pyramid. Tell them if their creative solution for including everyone might mean breaking a rule of the game, that is okay (unless it is a safety rule!).

Theme Exploration Questions

- What was the hardest part of the game?
- Remember, things can be challenging, but that doesn't mean they are not worth doing.

Suggested Ending Words

"As we make choices each day, may we remember to make them with love in mind."

Session B:

Love Pulls Us Up Stream

(Martin Luther King Jr. Day)

Theme Angle

The theme of the month is The Gift of Liberating Love. In this session, we explore how love is like a magnet and pulls us upstream. In other words, love calls us to fight the system, not just the symptoms of a problem. We explore how our faith reminds us that it is not enough to just pull people out of the river, but as UUs, we are called to go upstream and find out who or why they are being thrown in.

Light It!

This year, we have created a [Google Doc](#) so we can crowdsource our favorite Chalice Lightings! Please [share](#) the words and links to your favorite Chalice Lightings.

Extinguish It!

Signal the end of “sacred time” or “Chalice time” with a short ritual for extinguishing the chalice. It might be just after any of the below sections or at the end of the session. Use a [candle snuffer](#) if you use real candles for dramatic effect, or just blow it out. There are resources for chalice extinguishing words in the [Google Doc](#) as well:

Katie’s Words*

*We gather the light of truth, the warmth of love, and the energy of action into our hearts.
Back into the world of do and say,
Carry it forward into the dawning day.
Go Now in Peace, Amen.*

** (Move your arms to express the actions: gather using a cupping motion from the flame of the chalice to your heart, spread that outward again.)*

Introduce It!

The Gift Box!

(Formally Known as The Wonder Box)

Leader Note: We suggest [buying](#) or [creating](#) a gift box as your wonder box for this section, as a visual representation of this year's overarching theme: "The Gifts of our Faith." The Gift Box and the item inside can also be used as an object lesson during a Time for All Ages or as the opening to your RE group.

Love Pulls Us Up Stream

Reflection Object: a heart-shaped [magnet](#), a picture of a fishing net, and a picture of a river

Suggested Introductory Words

(Leader notes in the suggested script will be noted with [purple font](#) and italics.)

Introduction

This year, we are going to be exploring a bunch of values that are important to us UUs. They are like gifts our faith gives to us and asks us to give to the world. It's just like presents for a birthday party! So, our wonder box this year has been transformed into a gift box to help us explore that each week. This month's theme is **The Gift of Liberating Love**.

Reveal

So, with that in mind, what is the gift in today's Gift Box? It's our heart-shaped [magnet](#) and a picture of a life preserver!

Question

What do you think they represent? *(allow time for 2 or 3 kids to answer.)* This heart magnet is in the Gift Box to remind us that our UU faith says Love pulls us toward good things, and the life preserver is a clue to a certain kind of good thing. Let's explore and figure out that clue with a quick story...

***Leader Note:** The theme connection story below can also be used as the Tellable Tale during Your Time for all Ages. If you use it as the TFAA, move on to the call to action.*

Theme Connection Story - The Parable of the River (Adapted from [The Parable of the River Video Story](#))

One day, as a villager began his early morning stroll, he noticed that the once vibrant river looked slightly murkier than normal and contained some sludge and pollution resting on the banks.

The villager quickly went out of their way to clear the pollution and restore the flow. He thought all was well, but the next day, the same villager noticed two lifeless fish in the river. He scooped them out of the waters and again thought all was well.

But the following day, debris started to build up, and the river's flow became constricted, cutting off water to the village. Naturally, the villagers organized themselves quickly, setting up watchtowers and training teams of swimmers and environmentalists who could resist the swift waters and dislodge the debris. Clean-up squads were soon working 24 hours a day to keep up with the increase in pollution,

and while not all the debris and fish could be removed from the river, the villages felt they were doing well in cleaning up as much as they could. Indeed, the village priest even blessed them in their work, and life in the village continued on that basis for many months.

One day, however, a young girl was playing by the riverside and saw the pollution. She looked off in the distance and then turned to her grandfather, asking where all of the waste was coming from.

Her grandfather shrugged his shoulders and said, "Up Upriver somewhere, I guess." The little girl responded, "Well, let's organize a team to head upstream and find out who's throwing all their trash into the river in the first place!"

They brought this idea to the village elders, but they countered, saying things like:
"But if we were to go upstream, who would take care of the rescue operation?" and
"We need every concerned person here!" and
"Don't be ridiculous. It's too hard to travel upstream!"

The girl cried, "But you don't see, if we find out who's polluting the river, we can stop the problem, and no fish will die." The elders responded by saying, "It is far too risky, and we need all the help here," and so the number of fish found floating in the river continued.

Several days later, the young girl decided to go upstream herself to find the source of the corruption. Upstream, she found a mountain of plastic from the building of a nearby village that was releasing chemicals into the once beautiful river and blocking up the waterways.

The girl smiled to herself and began to remove as much as she could, and as she dealt with the source of the pollution upstream, the river downstream returned to normal, much to the joy of the other villagers.

The Parable of the River Video Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNTaISmch0k> (stop at 2:17)

Object Lesson

Place the picture of the river on the floor with the fishing net at one end to indicate downstream and the picture of the heart magnet at the other - to show upstream

Our society might say that the love in this story shows up downstream here (point to the finishing net) where the whole village is working to take debris out of the river. But our faith says that in the story, love shows up here (point to the heart). Why do you think that is? (allow time for 2 or 3 kids to answer.) It's because our faith says love pulls us upstream to find the source of the problems!

Call to Action

So, for today's session, we are going to explore how love is like a magnet and pulls us upstream. In other words, love calls us to fight the system - where the trash was being thrown in, not just the symptoms - the trash at the bottle of the river, of a problem. We explore how our faith reminds us that it is not enough to just pull people out of the river, but as UUs, we are called to go upstream and find out who or why they are being thrown in. Are you ready?! Great! Let's begin!

Tell It and Talk About It!

Leader Note: Our Tell It section offers two choices: a Picture Book and a “Tellable Tale” (often also called a wisdom tale or sacred story). We suggest you pick the one that fits your storytelling style best. **Picture books** are great for those who are more comfortable reading a story and have the ability to project slides of the pictures. **Tellable Tales** are great for those who like to incorporate the tradition of oral storytelling and are best done when they are memorized.

Our Tell It and Talk About It section can be used during your Time for All Ages or as the opening to your RE groups. If you use this section as your Time for All Ages, we suggest holding the group questions (the *Talk About It* portion) until you are in your RE space.

Tellable Tale: The River Story

From Tapestry of Faith, Windows and Mirrors

Suggested Introductory Words

“Our theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love. Today, we are exploring how love is like a magnet and pulls us upstream. In other words, love calls us to fight the system, not just the symptoms of a problem. We explore how our faith reminds us that it is not enough to just pull people out of the river, but as UUs, we are called to go upstream and find out who or why they are being thrown in.

Tellable Tale: Written Out in the Introduce It Section

Video Story: The Parable of the River Video Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNTaISmcH0k> (stop at 2:17)

Reflection Prompts

- What surprised you about this story? What lesson do you think the story wants us to remember?
- In the story, the girl went upriver to find the source of the problem. Have you ever found the source of a problem?

Picture Book: We March, by Shane W. Evans

Suggested Introductory Words

“Our theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love, and today, we are exploring a story about a remarkable event on August 28, 1963.

Book: [HERE](#) **Read Aloud:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJDH4qt8heE>

Reflection Prompts

- What surprised you about this story?
- What lesson do you think the story wants us to remember?

Suggested Ending Words:

More than 250,000 people gathered on August 28, 1963, in our nation's capital to participate in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The march began at the Washington Monument and ended with a rally at the Lincoln Memorial, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech, advocating racial harmony.

Explore It!

(Fun & Games for Experiential Learning)

Here are a variety of suggestions for digging deeper into the theme. We suggest that you pick two activities that you feel will best suit the needs and interests of your group.

Fun Activities

Change The System: River Coloring Page and MLK Story

This activity works with 2+ kids.

Set-Up

- Set out Coloring Supplies and Print multiple copies of these Serene Forest & River Coloring Pages: <https://craftingagreenworld.com/coloring-pages/nature-for-adults/>
- Set out a device to play the MLK Video.

Suggested Introductory Words

“Today, we are exploring how Love Pulls Us Upstream and calls us to help change the systems, not just the symptoms of problems. Tomorrow is also Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a day set aside to honor a person who worked tirelessly to change the system. So today, to help us understand this a bit more, we are going to watch a video about “perhaps the best-known leader in the Civil Rights Era, Martin Luther King, Jr. From his rise to notoriety during the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, his leadership of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the March on Washington in 1963, his work toward the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the mid-1960s, and his assassination in 1968, Dr. King is very broadly known.

While we are watching, we will also be able to color a river coloring sheet to go with our theme. The Love Will Pull Us Up Stream. Are you ready? Let's begin.”

Directions

- Pass out coloring sheets & coloring supplies and play videos while kids are coloring.
- Video: Martin Luther King Jr for Kids: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlllq284u20>
-

Games

River Crossing Game

This activity works with groups of 6+

Set-Up

- Create three islands by taping together four 8.5 x 11 sheets of paper for each island.
- Create a pebble for each person by cutting sheets of paper in half lengthwise to form 4.25 x 11 sheets.
- Create one rock (an 8.5 x 11 sheet) for every six participants.
- Tape off an open area at least 15 medium strides (30-35 feet) long and six strides wide.
- Tape down the islands.

Suggested Introductory Words

“This next game is one in which you all have to make it upstream without falling in! Here is the situation:

You and your teammates are at the end of a poisonous, deadly river. The river is so contaminated that if any part of a person’s skin or clothing touches the river, they will die instantly! Each of the people on your team must make it upstream to the beginning of the river and out at the same time. You have 30 minutes. Are you ready? Let’s play!

Directions

- Have all the kids stand on the bottom of the river and go over the game's rules. Then give a few minutes for questions. The clock starts after the last question is answered.
- Rules of the game:
 - No part of a person’s skin, clothing, or personal articles may touch the river. The only items that can survive in the river are islands, rocks, and pebbles.
 - Islands, rocks, and pebbles are safe spots (touchable).
 - Islands in the river may not be moved.
 - Rocks may not be moved once placed in the river.
 - Each team member owns a pebble that can be moved around the river - kids can work as a team, pick up and pass pebbles back and forth to help each other and exit the river when they feel ready.

Theme Exploration Questions

- Did everyone who wanted to speak get an opportunity to be heard?
- When suggestions were made, was a response given every time? (Or did some people’s suggestions get listened to while others were ignored?)
- Was a plan created? Who initiated the plan? How many people were involved in developing the plan?
- How was an agreement reached?
- Was there a leader or multiple leaders? How was the leadership chosen? Was the leadership followed?
- How willing were people to rely on one another, help one another, and physically support one another?
- Was the goal achieved? How much time was required? What was the key to achieving or not achieving the goal?

Suggested Ending Words

“Having fun is a way of turning an ordinary moment into a miracle of smiles and laughter.”

Debris Relay

This activity works with groups of 3+ children

Set-Up

- Use painter's tape to create two relay lanes called rivers
- **For round one**, have multiple pieces of “debris” (items that would go into the trash, recycling, or compost) scattered in each lane or river.
- **For round two**, set out a recycle bucket, a trash can, and a compost bin and create piles of “debris” (multiple items that would go into the trash, recycling, compost) at the end of each lane or river

Suggested Introductory Words

“This game is going to let us bring the River Parable to life and see how we can make the biggest difference. During the first round, your only job is to clear the debris from your river, and you will have 3 minutes to do it. During the second round, you will have to sort all the debris into its proper place in under 3 minutes.”

Directions

Round One

- Divide children into teams and have them form 2 lines, one in each relay river or lane.
- Explain to the groups that their goal is to completely clear their river and have it still be clear when the timer goes off.
- Set a timer for 5 minutes, and when you say go, the first child in each line runs “upriver,” picks up a piece of debris and tosses it to the side (the other team's river), runs back, and tags the next person.
- Continue for 3 minutes.

Round Two

- Pick up all the debris and have each team create a pile of it at the end of their river.
- Set a timer for 3 minutes. When you say go, the first child in each line runs “upriver” to a pile of debris, picks an item, decides if it should be recycled, trashed, or composted, and places it in the appropriate place.
- They then run back downstream and tag the next person.
- Continue for 3 minutes.

Theme Exploration Questions

- What round did you think would be easier and why?
- What round was actually easier and why?

Love Pulls Us Up Steam Magnet Game

This game is designed for groups of 2+

Set-Up

- Materials: Poster Board with an image of a river on it, lots of paper clips, elastic string or cord, tape, and magnets.
- Watch this video to see how the game is played:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sl_I4l_cFR4

Suggested Introductory Words

“We have been talking today about how love pulls us up steam and calls us to address the systems that are causing the problem, not just the systems of the problem. Our next game is a great example of this. Ready? Let’s begin.”

Directions

- Explain to the group that the next game is called Love Pulls Us Up Steam.
- To play, they will take turns holding magnetic cording at the top of the river (upstream) and let our magnets or the love pull us upstream to see how many paper clips they can pick up.
- It is then the next person's turn to do the same.
- The game ends when all the paper clips have been picked up. The player with the most is the winner.

Theme Exploration Questions

- What was the hardest part of the game?
- How might love pull you up steam in your lives? What might love pull you towards?

Suggested Ending Words:

“As we make choices each day, may we remember to make them with love in mind.”

Session C:

Love Pulls Us Back to The Table

Theme Angle

The theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love. In this session, we explore how love is like a magnet and pulls us back to the table. In other words, love holds us together and calls us back to the metamorphic table when fighting and encourages us to work it out.

Light It!

This year, we have created a [Google Doc](#) so we can crowdsource our favorite Chalice Lightings! Please [share](#) the words and links to your favorite Chalice Lightings.

Extinguish It!

Signal the end of “sacred time” or “Chalice time” with a short ritual for extinguishing the chalice. It might be just after any of the below sections or at the end of the session. Use a [candle snuffer](#) if you use real candles for dramatic effect, or just blow it out. There are resources for chalice extinguishing words in the [Google Doc](#) as well:

Katie’s Words*

*We gather the light of truth, the warmth of love, and the energy of action into our hearts.
Back into the world of do and say,
Carry it forward into the dawning day.
Go Now in Peace, Amen.*

** (Move your arms to express the actions: gather using a cupping motion from the flame of the chalice to your heart, spread that outward again.)*

The Gift Box!

(Formally Known as The Wonder Box)

Leader Note: We suggest [buying](#) or [creating](#) a gift box as your wonder box for this section, as a visual representation of this year's overarching theme: "The Gifts of our Faith." The Gift Box and the item inside can be used to help kids make the connection that the values of our faith are gifts we are called to both give and receive, just as we do with a gift or present. The Gift Box and the item inside can be used as an object lesson during a Time for All Ages or as the opening to your RE group.

Love Pulls Us Back to The Table

(Leader notes in the suggested script will be noted with [purple font](#) and italics.)

Reflection Objects: an orange, a flashlight, two toothpicks, and a permanent marker

(Leader notes in the suggested script will be noted with [purple font](#) and italics.)

Introduction

This year, we are going to be exploring a bunch of values that are important to us UUs. They are like gifts our faith gives to us and asks us to give to the world. It's just like presents for a birthday party! So, our wonder box this year has been transformed into a gift box to help us explore that each week. This month's theme is **The Gift of Liberating Love**.

Reveal

So, with that in mind, what is the gift in today's Gift Box? It's our heart-shaped [magnet](#) and a little table!

Question

What do you think they represent? *(allow time for 2 or 3 kids to answer.)* This heart magnet is in the Gift Box to remind us that our UU faith says Liberating Love pulls us to something, and the table is a clue as to what that something is. Let's explore the clue with a quick story...

[Leader Note: The theme connection story below can also be used as the Tellable Tale during Your Time for all Ages. If you choose to use it as the TFAA, move on to the call to action.](#)

Theme Connection Story - Stone Soup (Adapted)

Once upon a time, there was a small village inhabited by people who were quite poor and very angry. They didn't like sharing their things with others as they had very little and were always fighting with one another, especially when it came to food. Nobody wanted to be hungry, so they were all quick to hide what they had and not share. This led to many, many fights, and eventually they all began to lock their doors and windows tight and keep the little provisions they had for themselves.

One day, a visitor passed through the village. He was very hungry and exhausted from his long journey. He stopped at the first house he could see and knocked on the door, hoping to get some food. The woman inside cracked open the door a little and asked, "Who are you?"

"I am a traveler, and I was passing through your village. I am tired and hungry. Can I please have something to eat?" "Go away; we hardly have any food here," replied the woman. "I doubt you'll find anyone here who has food to spare. We are all poor," said the woman. After she said this, the woman closed the door in the traveler's face.

The traveler was not ready to give up and picked up a large stone from the ground and knocked again on the woman's door. The lady came to the door again and opened it only halfway. "What do you want

now?" asked the woman. "Since you are poor like me, maybe you'd like to have some of my stone soup. It is delicious and fulfilling!" "Stone soup, you say?" laughed the woman as she saw the stone in the traveler's hand. "You can't make soup from a stone." To that, the traveler replied, "Yes, you can! I've done it before."

The woman didn't believe him as she had never seen someone make soup from stones. However, she was hungry too, so she invited him in. She lit the fire, placed a kettle of water on top, and opened the windows to let the heat out. The traveler placed the stones in the water until the water started boiling. He took a sip of the hot liquid and said, "It's almost done! But, if you had just a little salt and butter, it would taste much better!"

The woman went to her cupboard and returned with salt and butter. As the traveler was adding them to the stone soup, the woman's husband returned home with carrots and potatoes in his hand. "What are you cooking?" asked the woman's husband. "Stone soup!" replied the traveler and the woman. The man could not believe this and thought that it was impossible to make soup out of a stone.

"It's almost finished!" said the traveler as he tasted another spoonful of the soup. "However, it would taste much better if we added carrots and potatoes to it," said the traveler. The husband was also hungry, so he agreed to add some carrots and potatoes to the stone soup.

Soon, the smell of the soup drifted out of the open window and down the lane. A neighbor who usually stayed inside wandered out and followed the smell all the way to the first house. There, he heard the woman, her husband, and the traveler talking about the stone soup. "Is the stone soup ready now?" the woman and her husband asked the traveler. "Yes, but it could be even better if we had some turnips and beans!" "I have some!" yelled the neighbor who was watching them from the window.

The neighbor was curious to taste the soup made of stones, so he returned with turnips and beans. He poured it into the pot, and the smell of the soup drifted further into the village.

Word of a traveler making soup out of a stone drew the villagers out of their houses and towards the woman's house. They all followed the smell. "Is the stone soup ready yet?" asked the villagers when they came to the window. "Yes, but I remember having stone soup with fresh chicken and broth in the stew once," replied the traveler.

"I have chicken!" said a farmer and then ran home to get some. "I have broth!" exclaimed another villager who ran to fetch it. They both came and placed the items into the pot. By this moment, the pot was packed to the brim with goodness. The traveler tried another sip of the soup, "Perfect!" he exclaimed. He then proceeded to serve a bowl of stone soup to every villager.

"It's delicious!" said the villagers. "Where can we get this magic stone?" asked some. The traveler shook his head and pulled out the stone from the soup. The villagers realized that it was a normal stone, and the soup's flavor came from the ingredients and not the stone. The traveler drank what was left of the soup and continued with his journey. The villagers realized that when they stopped fighting and learned to come back together and share their things with each other, they could live together in harmony.

Object Lesson

Place the table in one spot and the heart magnet a few inches away.

We all get into disagreements with people or sometimes don't want to share or fight with others. But the story reminds us that love shows up here like this (pull the heart back to the table and place it on top). Why do you think that is? (allow time for 2 or 3 kids to answer.) It's because our faith reminds us that love is the thing that holds us together and pulls us back to the table even when things get hard.

Call to Action

So, for today's session, we are going to explore how love is like a magnet and pulls up back to the table. In other words, love calls us to return to each other even when things are hard, and we would rather walk away or stay by ourselves. We explore how our faith reminds us that it is not enough just to show love and care for those we get along with; but we must show it to everyone. Are you ready?! Great! Let's begin!

Tell It and Talk About It!

Leader Note: Our Tell It section offers two choices: a Picture Book and a “Tellable Tale” (often also called a wisdom tale or sacred story). We suggest you pick the one that fits your storytelling style best.

Our Tell It and Talk About It section can be used during your Time for All Ages or as the opening to your RE groups. If you use this section as your Time for All Ages, we suggest holding the group questions (the *Talk About It* portion) until you are in your RE space. **Oral Storying Telling Tips:** [here](#) & [here](#)

Tellable Tale: Stone Soup

Suggested Introductory Words

“Our theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love, and today, we are exploring how love is like a magnet and pulls us back to the table. In other words, love calls us to remember that it is love that holds us together and calls us back to the “table” and each other when we are fighting and encourages us to work it out. So, with that in mind, I want to tell you a story of a village that was always fighting and unable to share until a traveler reminded them that love pulls us back to the table.

Tell “Stone Soup” Written Out in the Introduce It Section

Story Read Aloud: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4nMP2YBiW4>

Reflection Prompts

- What surprised you about this story?
 - What lesson do you think the story wants us to remember?
- The villagers in the story didn’t want to share, and, at the beginning, they fought about the food. Have you ever had a hard time sharing or fought over something?

Picture Book: The Squirrels Who Squabbled by Rachel Bright

Suggested Introductory Words

“Our theme this month is Liberating Love, and today we are exploring how love pulls us back to the table and calls us to make things right even after a fight. So, with that in mind, I want to share a story with you about two squirrels that learned this lesson. Are you ready? Here we go.”

Book: [HERE](#) **Read-Aloud:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8q3GFXricMo>

Reflection Prompts

- What surprised you about this story?
- What lesson do you think the story wants us to remember?
- In the book, the squirrels fought because they both thought the pinecone was theirs. Do you think they could have found a way to share it? If so, what?
- At the end of the story, when the squirrels go over the waterfall and Cyril catches Bruce, they realize that love will pull them back to the “table” or, in other words, back together to work it out. Have you had a time when you went back to work things out with someone after a fight?

Explore It!

(Fun & Games for Experiential Learning)

Here are a variety of suggestions for digging deeper into the theme. We suggest that you pick 2 activities that you feel will best suit the needs and interests of your group.

Fun Activities

Recipe for Love

Set-Up

- Download and print the page [Recipe for Love Template](#)
- Set out White Markers

Suggested Script and Directions

“Has anyone ever baked before? *(raise your hand and indicate that children can answer the same way.)*

When you baked, did you follow a recipe? *(Raise your hand and indicate that children can answer the same way.)*

Some people think love is kind of like a recipe. It takes a bunch of different things to create love. Today, we are exploring how love pulls us back to the table to work things out after a fight or a disagreement. What are some of the things you might need to do that, and what might some of the ingredients in the recipe for love be? *(validate children's answers)*

For our next activity, you will each get to create your own perfect Recipe for Love and what things you would need to come back to the table and work things out. When everyone is done, leave space for kids to share their recipes.

Recipe for Love Example

1 Cup of Kindness	1 Cup of Forgiveness
1 Pinch of I’m Sorry	½ Cup of Talking
2 Spoonfuls of Gentleness	1 zest of Humor
1 lb. of Friendship	¾ Cups of Love
3 Tablespoons of Patience	

Make Stone Soup

This activity works with any number of kids.

Set up

- Crock Pot and, of course, some stones
- **Soup Ingredients:** 1 1/2 teaspoons oil, 1 onion diced, 2 tablespoons Italian seasoning blend, 2 teaspoons salt, 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, 2 teaspoons minced garlic, 1 (28 ounces) can crushed tomatoes with basil, 2 (14.5 ounces) cans sliced carrots, drained, 1 (14.5 ounces) can cut green beans, drained, 1 (15.25 ounce) can whole sweet corn, drained, 1 (15 ounces) can peas, drained, 1 (6 ounces) can tomato paste, 8 cups vegetable broth.

Suggested Introductory Script

“Let’s continue to explore the idea that love pulls us back to the table when we are fighting to work things out. So let’s make our stone soup to share at coffee hour and remind people of the importance of coming back to the table to work things out. Are you ready? Let’s begin.

Directions

- Turn the crock pot on high and add oil, onion, garlic, Italian seasoning blend, salt, and pepper and stir for 5 minutes.
- Add the rest of the ingredients, stir, cover and cook for 30-45 minutes (stirring occasionally)
- Serve and enjoy! *(You can serve this with some crusty bread and a quick salad, and you’ve got a healthy lunch ready in less than 20 minutes. I think it’s going to make you very happy, too! ENJOY this one, friends!)*
- As you make the soup, invite kids to share times when they worked through a disagreement or fight and what that was like for them.

Suggested Closing Words

“May we be reminded that love pulls us back to the table and holds us together.”

Love Pulls Us Back to The Table - Magnet Maze

<https://www.instructables.com/Magnet-Maze/>

Set up

- Materials: Paper, Popsicle Sticks, Glue, Magnets, Paper fastener/Paper clip, Markers

Suggested Introductory Script

“Let’s continue our exploration of the idea that love pulls us back to the table when we are fighting to work things out. But that is not always easy and sometimes it takes some navigating to make sure everyone is heard, and everyone feels good at the end of the conversation. To help us experience how that navigation can be tricky, our next activity is a magnet maze that ends with us at the table. Are you ready? Let’s begin.

Directions

- Mark your start and finish points on your paper. The finish point should be an image of a table.
- Cut your popsicle sticks into different lengths using scissors.
- Decorate your popsicle sticks!
- Use the popsicle sticks to create a pathway to the finish line. Be sure that it is wide enough for your paper fastener/paper clip to slide through. Be creative with your maze! Will your maze have some tricks to it? You can choose to plan your path or make the path organically!

- Glue down the popsicle sticks.
- Place the paper fastener/paper clip at the start point and place the magnet underneath the paper. Use the magnet to slide and maneuver the paper fastener/paper clip through the maze to the finish line! See how fast you can get through the maze, then turn it into a race by asking others to see how fast they can get through it!

Suggested Closing Words

“May we be reminded that love pulls us back to the table and holds us together.”

Games

Stone Soup Board Game

This game works with 2-4 children.

Set-Up

- Purchase and set out the Stone Soup Board Game - <https://www.amazon.com/Peaceable-Kingdom-Winning-Cooperative-Matching/dp/B004HVKA9Y>

Suggested Script

“Earlier, we heard the story of stone soup and were reminded that our faith sees love as the thing that holds us together and brings us back to the table when we fight. Has anyone ever fought with a friend while playing a game? What did you fight about? *(validate all answers)* Fighting with friends can be hard, especially when you are trying to have fun. Today, we are going to play the stone soup game and work together as a team to “cook” a soup by making matches of ingredients before the fire under the kettle goes out! If we are successful, everyone wins! Ready? Let’s go! “

Directions

- Play the game

Theme Exploration Questions

- What was the hardest part of that game?
- Was there a time when you got frustrated? How did you handle it with love?

Suggested Closing Words

“May we be reminded that love pulls us back to the table and holds us together.”

Love Tic Tac Toe Relay Race

<https://www.sswwww.com/blog/tic-tac-toe-relay-pe-activity/>

**This activity is for 4+ players and works best with an even number
(although it can be done with an odd number of kids)**

Set-Up

- Preview the game at <https://www.sswwww.com/blog/tic-tac-toe-relay-pe-activity/>
- Materials: Table and chairs for each player, 9 Hula Hoops (tic tac toe board), 6 large Heart (3 of each color bean), 1 cone to designate a starting point
- Set up the Hula Hoops in a tic tac toe board at the opposite end of the room from the table.

Suggested Script

“We are exploring how love pulls us back to the table. Do you know how to play [Tic Tac Toe](#)? (Pause so the children who know can describe the game.) It is a game that usually takes place in one spot at a table. Today we are going to play a different version. One that requires us to run back to the table at each turn. Ready? Let’s go! “

Directions

- Divide the group into two teams, give them each a heart color, and have them sit at a table (each team on opposite sides)
- Place all the hearts in the center of the table.
- On go, the first person from each team will run down to the tic tac toe board and place their heart in one of the hula hoops.
- After they place the heart, they will race back to their line to high-five the next person in line.
- The next student will jump up from their seat at the table and run down to place their heart in an open hoop.
- The goal is to have your team get 3 in a row (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally).
- If all 3 markers have been played and there is no tic tac toe, the next student in line will run down and move one of their own team markers into an open hula hoop. And so on until there is a tic tac toe.

Theme Exploration Questions

- Was running back to the table each time challenging? Why?
- Do you think being pulled back to the table to fix things is hard? Why
- Do you think it is worth it to work things out? Why

Suggested Closing Words

“May we be reminded that love pulls us back to the table and holds us together.”

Session D:

Love Pulls Us Toward Self-Acceptance

Theme Angle

The theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love. In this session, how love pulls us to accept ourselves, knowing that we will never be perfect. In our society, it can be easy to get stuck in the idea of perfectionism and the thought patterns of “I have to be perfect to be enough, to have value, or for people to like me.” Our faith reminds us that self-acceptance is like a magnet and pulls us back to a place of accepting ourselves, loving our imperfections, and, in doing so, creating space for us to love ourselves.

Light It!

This year, we have created a [Google Doc](#) so we can crowdsource our favorite Chalice Lightings! Please [share](#) the words and links to your favorite Chalice Lightings.

Extinguish It!

Signal the end of “sacred time” or “Chalice time” with a short ritual for extinguishing the chalice. It might be just after any of the below sections or at the end of the session. Use a [candle snuffer](#) if you use real candles for dramatic effect, or just blow it out. There are resources for chalice extinguishing words in the [Google Doc](#) as well:

Katie’s Words*

*We gather the light of truth, the warmth of love, and the energy of action into our hearts.
Back into the world of do and say,
Carry it forward into the dawning day.
Go Now in Peace, Amen.*

** (Move your arms to express the actions: gather using a cupping motion from the flame of the chalice to your heart, spread that outward again.)*

Introduce It!

The Gift Box!

(Formally Known as The Wonder Box)

Leader Note: We suggest [buying](#) or [creating](#) a gift box as your wonder box for this section, as a visual representation of this year's overarching theme: "The Gifts of our Faith." The Gift Box and the item inside can be used to help kids make the connection that the values of our faith are gifts we are called to both give and receive, just as we do with a gift or present. The Gift Box and the item inside can be used as an object lesson during a Time for All Ages or as the opening to your RE group.

Love Pulls Us Toward Self-Acceptance

Reflection Objects: heart magnet, a pot, and flowers

(Leader notes in the suggested script will be noted with [purple font](#) and italics.)

Introduction

This year, we are going to be exploring all the different gifts our faith gives us and all the gifts being UU asks us to give to others. It's just like presents for a birthday party! So, our wonder box has been transformed into a gift box to help us explore that each week. This month's theme is **The Gift of Liberating Love**.

Reveal

So, with that in mind, let's see what is in the Gift Box. *([open the box and pull out the objects.](#))*
It's our heart magnet, a pot, and flowers.

Question

What do you think they represent? *([allow time for children to answer.](#))* This heart magnet is in the Gift Box to remind us that our UU faith says Liberating Love pulls us to something and the pot and flowers are clues as to what that something is. Let's explore the clue with a quick story...

[Leader Note: The theme connection story below can also be used as the Tellable Tale during Your Time for all Ages. If you choose to use it as the TFAA, move on to the call to action.](#)

Theme Connection Story - The Water Bearer's Garden

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/windows/session5/143528.shtml>

A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on one end of a pole that he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. For two years, this went on daily, with the bearer having only one and a half pots full of water to his master's house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer, "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house.

Because of my flaws, you have to do all this work, and you don't get full value from our efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the cracked pot, and in his compassion, he said, "As we return to the master's house I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old, cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wildflowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt sad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again, the pot apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer asked the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on our side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years, I have been able to pick beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house.

"We all have our own unique flaws. We are all cracked pots. In God's great web of life, nothing goes to waste. Don't be afraid of your flaws. Acknowledge them, and you, too, can be the cause of beauty. Know that in our weakness, we find our strength.

Object Lesson

Place the flowers in one spot, the pot in the other, and the heart magnet a few inches away.

Our society might say that the love in this story shows up here (move the heart to the pot), saying that We should love ourselves. And while that is true, and we absolutely should, our faith takes it one step Further, it says that in the story, love shows up here (move the heart to the flowers). Why do you think that is? (allow time for 2 or 3 kids to answer.) It's because our faith says love pulls us toward self-acceptance!

Call to Action

So, for today's session, we are going to explore how it pulls us to accept ourselves, knowing that we will never be perfect. In our society, it can be easy to get stuck in the idea of perfectionism and the thought patterns of "I have to be perfect to be enough or for people to like me." Our faith reminds us that self-love is like a magnet and pulls us back to a place of accepting ourselves, loving our imperfections, and in doing so, creates space for us to love ourselves. Great! Let's begin!

Tell It and Talk About It!

Leader Note: Our Tell It section offers two choices: a Picture Book and a “Tellable Tale” (often also called a wisdom tale or sacred story). We suggest you pick the one that fits your storytelling style best.

Our Tell It and Talk About It section can be used during your Time for All Ages or as the opening to your RE groups. If you use this section as your Time for All Ages, we suggest holding the group questions (the *Talk About It* portion) until you are in your RE space. **Oral Storying Telling Tips:** [here](#) & [here](#)

Tellable Tale: The Water Bearer's Garden

Suggested Introductory Words

“Today, we are exploring how love pulls us toward self-acceptance and reminds us that we have value and are enough even when we are not perfect. So, with that in mind, I want to tell you a tale called The Water Bearer’s Garden.

Tell “The Water Bearers” By Betsy Hill Williams in Tapestry of Faith, Windows and Mirrors

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/windows/session5/143528.shtml>

Reflection Prompts

- What surprised you about this story?
- In the story, the pot felt like it was flawed and could get the job done. What are some other everyday objects that might be seen as flawed objects? *(If kids have a hard time coming up with answers, you might suggest ripped jeans or a lamp with no bulb.)*
- Have you ever been in a situation where you could not do a job up to expectations, like the cracked pot? How did you feel?
- Why didn't the cracked pot notice the flowers until the water bearer pointed them out?

Picture Book: Penelope Perfect: A Tale of Perfectionism Gone Wild by Shannon Anderson

Suggested Introductory Words

“Our theme this month is Liberating Love, and today we are exploring how love pulls us toward self-acceptance and away from the idea that we have to be perfect to have value or matter. So, with that in mind, I want to read you a story about a girl called Penelope Perfect and what happens one day when she oversleeps, and her daily routine gets thrown for a loop. Ready? Here we go.”

Book: [HERE](#) **Read-Aloud:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8m2FQUQmpq0>

Reflection Prompts

- What surprised you about this story?
- What lesson do you think the story wants us to remember?
- In the book, Penelope felt like she always had to be perfect. Have you ever felt like that? How does the longest night feel to you?

Explore It!

(Fun & Games for Experiential Learning)

Here are a variety of suggestions for digging deeper into the theme. We suggest that you pick 2 activities that you feel will best suit the needs and interests of your group.

Nobody's Perfect

From Tapestry of Faith: Windows and Mirrors:

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/windows/session5/143515.shtml>

This activity works with any number of kids.

Set up

- Materials: Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Post blank newsprint. Draw a line down the middle to make two columns. Head the left-hand column on the newsprint: "Perfect..."

Suggested Introductory Script

"We have been talking about how our faith calls us more than just comforting love that makes us feel comfortable and safe, it also calls us to a kind of love that is like a magnet and pulls to other things are going to talk today about perfection. Have you ever tried to be perfect? What does it mean to be "perfect"? Let's collect our ideas.

Directions

- Ask the group to name things that can be perfect. In the left-hand column, write their ideas as nouns-e.g., (perfect) teeth, a (perfect) day, (perfectly) clean room, or (being perfect at) school, gymnastics, math, or behavior. Leave space between items on your list; use more newsprint if you need to.
- Once you have a variety of ideas, invite the group to explain how they identify perfection in the different instances they suggested; use the right-hand column for notes. You might ask, "What are the traits of a perfect math student?" or "What makes a clean-up job 'perfect'?" Your notes should be descriptive phrases-e.g., gets all "A"s (perfect student), never loses a game (perfect athlete), never gets sick (perfectly healthy).
- Explore three "perfections" together (or more, if you have time and children are engaged). To conclude, offer that a definition of "perfect" might be "meeting a specific checklist of exact standards." Suggest that while someone might be a "perfect" student, earning all "A" 's all the time, or have "perfect" teeth that are straight and gleaming white with no cavities, no person can be perfect in every way all the time.

Suggested Closing Words

"Love pulls us toward accepting ourselves and reminds us that we do not have to be perfect to have value."

Oops!... Wow!

From Tapestry of Faith: Windows and Mirrors:

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/windows/session5/143515.shtml>

This activity works with any number of kids

Set up

- Gather materials: Silly putty, Chocolate chip cookies, Velcro, Sticky notes, A Slinky, A bar of Ivory soap, Paper, and pencils.
- Spread the items (Silly Putty, chocolate chip cookies, etc.) around the room, setting each on a separate table.
- Place paper and pencils with each item. Write the name of each item at the top of the page.
- Oops!... Wow! Explanations:
<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/windows/session5/143536.shtml>

Suggested Introductory Script

“Take a look around the room and see if you recognize any of the items on the tables. (*indicate where you have placed each of the items.*)

You recognize these items because you have probably used most of them. But each one exists only because someone accidentally made it while trying to invent something else.

In a moment, I will split you up into groups, and then each group will all have two and a half minutes at each of three tables to make up a theory of how the item on the table came to be accidentally invented.

When you are thinking about your theory, ask yourselves

What was someone trying to do? What went wrong? How did they realize they had actually invented something useful?

You will then write down your theories on the paper next to the items. If another group has already written a theory on the paper, the new theory has to be different.

Directions

- Form at least three small groups.
- Send each group to a different table. Rotate the groups, allowing each group to visit at least three tables. Watch time carefully; you may wish to give 30-second warnings before each rotation.
- Save five minutes to compare what groups wrote and then share the real story about each invention from the [Oops!... Wow! Explanations](#)

Suggested Closing Words

“Love pulls us toward accepting ourselves and reminds us that we do not have to be perfect to have value.”

Unperfect Dessert

This activity is for any number of children.

Leader Note: Before doing this activity, be sure to check with parents/caregivers for food allergies.

Set-Up

- Tools: Mixing bowl, Electric mixer, Cupcake tins & wrappers, and Oven
- Ingredients: 1 package spice cake mix (regular size), 1 can (10-3/4 ounces) condensed tomato soup (undiluted), 3 large eggs, 1/2 cup water, 1 can (16 ounces) cream cheese frosting

Suggested Script

“How many of you like cupcakes? (*allow time for 2 or 3 kids to answer.*) What do you think makes a perfect cupcake? (*allow time for 2 or 3 kids to answer.*) What about tomato soup? Is that a perfect ingredient for a cupcake? Why or why not?

Would you believe me if I told you it was? Today, we are exploring how love pulls us toward self-acceptance, and part of self-acceptance is not letting people put us down or tell us we can’t do things just because they may not be perfect.

Tomato soup is a great example of that. You are right. It may not be the most perfect cupcake ingredient, but it does a great job of making a very yummy cupcake. And while we might not immediately think of it as a dessert ingredient, this unlikely ingredient is just like the cracked pot from our story earlier. We just need to give it the space to share its special gifts, just like we need to remind ourselves to love and accept ourselves and create spaces and ways for us to share our gifts.

Directions

Option 1: If your congregation has baking facilities

- Make these cupcakes with children to be shared at coffee hour after. Follow this recipe:
- Preheat oven to 350°. In a large bowl, combine cake mix, soup, eggs, and water; beat on low speed for 30 seconds. Beat on medium for 2 minutes. Pour into a greased cupcake tin.
- Bake for 20 minutes or until cooked through for best results.
- Bring them to coffee hour and see if folks can guess the imperfect mystery ingredient.

Option 2: If you do not have baking facilities

- Make the cupcakes ahead of time and let kids eat them while coloring the below-cracked pot coloring sheet.
- Coloring Sheet:
https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fpoway.instructure.com%2Fcourses%2F80431%2Ffiles%2F9861201%2Fdownload%3Fwrap%3D1&psig=AOvVaw05V9AwMJ_IfJMQ7vy93-je&ust=1698773799015000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBMQjhxqFwoTCJjZ4YaonoIDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAY

Suggested Closing Words

“Love pulls us toward accepting ourselves and reminds us that we do not have to be perfect to have value.”

Games

Rolling In Acceptance

This game is for 2+ players.

Set-Up

- Materials: Enough tokens/game pieces per child, Dice, and a DIY Game Board
- To create your game board -download and print a game board of your choice from any of these DIY Printable templates:
https://www.google.com/search?q=diy+board+game+template&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwilz82lu56CAxUJGmIAHZm6AyEQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=diy+board+tem&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQARgAMgYIABAIEB4yBggAEAgQHjIGCAAQCBAeMgYIABAIEB4yBggAEAgQHjoHCAAQigUQQzoFCAAQgARQuwZYjRpgsydoAHAAeACAAUyIAacEkgEBOJgBAKABAaoBC2d3cy13aXotaW1nwAEB&sclient=img&ei=Nf4_ZeXgPlm0iLMPmfWOiAI&bih=718&biw=1440&rlz=1C5CHFA_enUS897US897#imgsrc=Xae6AytUN_z6DM
- Once the board is printed, label a few squares with things like skip a turn, return to home, change places with another player, move back 2, move ahead 2, etc.

Suggested Script

“We have been exploring how love pulls us to acceptance, and sometimes the best way to accept things about ourselves is to say them out loud, so for our next game, that is exactly what we will do.!”

Directions

- Set out the game board and dice.
- Explain to kids that they will roll the dice, whichever number appears on the dice, the person has to say that many positive characteristics about themselves, things that may not be perfect but that they accept and love.
- They then move their token to that many spaces.
- The first person to reach the finish line wins.

Suggested Closing Words

“Love pulls us toward accepting ourselves and reminds us that we do not have to be perfect to have value.”

Children's Chapel & Family Ministry Suggestions

Below are picture books, tellable tales, and a Soul Work Table section to support your efforts beyond RE age groups into multigenerational times for all ages.

Stories from This RE Packet

Knowing that some congregations will want to ensure continuity between worship and RE classes, we list this packet's stories to make them all available in one glance.

Tellable Tale: A Lamp in Every Corner

Suggested Introductory Words

"Our theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love. This story tells of how a community transformed itself, building a church with the efforts of many individuals and ultimately lighting the new building with glowing flames from candles held by all the people who contributed. This story is one way of understanding how love pulls us to work together and helps us build a foundation."

A Lamp in Every Corner: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/miracles/session-6/lamp>

Picture Book: Swimmy, by Leo Lionni

Suggested Introductory Words

"Our theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love, and today we are exploring that theme by reading a story about a little fish that helps its community come together with ingenuity and teamwork so they can overcome any danger. This is a great story to help us connect to the idea that Love is what holds us together.

Book: [HERE](#)

Read-Aloud: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcc-AkC9CsQ> (3:48 min)

Tellable Tale: The River Story

From Tapestry of Faith, Windows and Mirrors

Suggested Introductory Words

"Our theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love. Today, we are exploring how love is like a magnet and pulls us upstream. In other words, love calls us to fight the system, not just the symptoms of a problem. We explore how our faith reminds us that it is not enough to just pull people out of the river, but as UUs, we are called to go upstream and find out who or why they are being thrown in."

Tellable Tale: Written Out in the Introduce It Section of Session B

Video Story: The Parable of the River Video Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNTaISmcH0k> (stop at 2:17)

Picture Book: We March, by Shane W. Evans

Suggested Introductory Words

"Our theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love, and today, we are exploring a story about a remarkable event on August 28, 1963."

Book: [HERE](#) **Read Aloud:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJDH4qt8heE>

Suggested Ending Words:

More than 250,000 people gathered on August 28, 1963, in our nation's capital to participate in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The march began at the Washington Monument and ended with a rally at the Lincoln Memorial, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech, advocating racial harmony.

Tellable Tale: Stone Soup

Suggested Introductory Words

"Our theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love, and today, we are exploring how love is like a magnet and pulls us back to the table. In other words, love calls us to remember that it is love that holds us together and calls us back to the "table" and each other when we are fighting and encourages us to work it out. So, with that in mind, I want to tell you a story of a village that was always fighting and unable to share until a traveler reminded them that love pulls us back to the table."

Tell "Stone Soup" Written Out in the Introduce It Section of Session C

Story Read Aloud: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4nMP2YBiW4>

Picture Book: The Squirrels Who Squabbled by Rachel Bright

Suggested Introductory Words

"Our theme this month is Liberating Love, and today we are exploring how love pulls us back to the table and calls us to make things right even after a fight. So, with that in mind, I want to share a story with you about two squirrels that learned this lesson. Are you ready? Here we go."

Book: [HERE](#) **Read-Aloud:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8q3GFXricMo>

Tellable Tale: The Water Bearer's Garden

Suggested Introductory Words

"Our theme this month is The Gift of Liberating Love, and today, we are exploring how love pulls us toward self-acceptance and reminds us that we have value and are enough even when we are not perfect. So, with that in mind, I want to tell you a tale called The Water Bearer's Garden."

Tellable Tale "The Water Bearers" Written Out in the Introduce It Section of Session D

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/windows/session5/143528.shtml>

Picture Book: Penelope Perfect: A Tale of Perfectionism Gone Wild by Shannon Anderson

Suggested Introductory Words

"Our theme this month is Liberating Love, and today we are exploring how love pulls us toward self-acceptance and away from the idea that we have to be perfect to have value or matter. So, with that in mind, I want to read you a story about a girl called Penelope Perfect and what happens one day when she oversleeps, and her daily routine gets thrown for a loop. Ready? Here we go."

Book: [HERE](#) **Read-Aloud:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8m2FQUQmpq0>

Soul Work Table Activities

We've heard from many that you are using a multi-sensory table right in the sanctuary to support a multigenerational community for worship. Some of our Christian cousins call it a "Prayground." Read about some examples [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). In UU circles, the tables are often for all ages, meaning adults are invited to use it, too. Thanks to April Rosario, Soul Matters Director of Young Youth Resources and DRE in Taunton, MA, for permission to use the same name as their congregational sanctuary table. We love calling it the "Soul Work Table!" Here are possible activities for the table from our packet this month:

Change The System: River Coloring Page

- Print and set out multiple copies of these Serene Forest & River Coloring Pages: <https://craftingagreenworld.com/coloring-pages/nature-for-adults/>

Love Pulls Us Up Steam Magnet Game

- Create a Poster Board with an image of a river on it,
- Set out lots of paper clips and magnets with elastic string/ cord taped to them.
- Print out a directions sheet that explains folks can hold the cording at the top of the river (upstream) and let our magnets or the love pull us upstream to see how many paper clips they can pick up.

Stone Soup Board Game

- Purchase and set out the Stone Soup Board Game - <https://www.amazon.com/Peaceable-Kingdom-Winning-Cooperative-Matching/dp/B004HVKA9Y>

Water Bearers Coloring Sheets

- Download, Print and set out these Water Bearer Coloring Sheet: https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fpoway.instructure.com%2Fcourses%2F80431%2Ffiles%2F9861201%2Fdownload%3Fwrap%3D1&psig=AOvVaw05V9AwMJ_IfJMQ7vy93-je&ust=1698773799015000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBMQjhxqFwoTCJjZ4YaonoIDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAY

Opportunities for Leader Support

Katie's Overview of the monthly packets

Katie Covey, our Director of RE, gives an overview of the packet for the next month's theme. These 15-minute overviews are recorded and posted on the [Soul Matters YouTube Channel](#). Posting on or around the Second Wednesday of the month and announced on the RE Leaders Facebook Page.

So mid-October is when we will post the video overview for November's theme of Generosity

Other Resources and Sources of Support

RE Leader Facebook Page

Don't forget about our RE Leader Support Facebook page. Here is where our colleagues post bulletin board pictures, share books, and ideas. It's a great ongoing source of support. Your colleagues are available to support you at the click of a button and with the ease of a post: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/545202255591601/>

Inspiration Facebook Page

Offer your teachers and parents spiritual nourishment and inspiration by encouraging them to join the Soul Matters Inspiration Facebook Page. Use the memes for your congregational FB page, as well:

<https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/>

Soul Matters Music Playlists

We create two different playlists on the monthly theme each month: one in Spotify and another in YouTube. Music connects us to the themes in a way like nothing else.

Click [here](#) for links to the [Spotify playlists](#) for each month. Click [here](#) to check out the [YouTube playlists](#).

On the Road Together - Soul Matters Senior High Youth Packet

A monthly packet for High School Youth Groups! Here's the link to the [Soul Matters Youth Packet](#) page on our website. Sessions with resources for Check In, Spiritual Practice, Discussion Starters, Expressing Yourself with the Arts, Fun and Games, and Off-Road Excursions.

In the Middle - Monthly Middle School Curriculum

Wholistically designed, focused on building trust and community and reinforcing the truth that none of us can navigate life's journey alone. 4 weeks of theme-based sessions every month. Learn more [here](#).

Becoming - A Soul Matters Coming of Age Program

Our take on the classic curriculum that supports youth as they explore, develop and articulate their personal values and faith identity. Learn more [here](#)

Crossing Paths - A Soul Matters "Neighboring Faiths" Curriculum

Helping youth deepen their own faith by deepening their understanding of other faiths. Learn more [here](#).

Soulful Home Family Guides

Invite your parents to explore the themes at home with their family by subscribing to our monthly parent guides, **Soulful Home**. Here's the link to the Soulful Home page on our website: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/soulful-home.html>.

Soul Matters RE Packet Author & Support Team

***Packet Author:
April Rosario, Soul Matters Director of RE***

Thanks to all the Soul Matters Religious Educators who send in suggestions for our monthly packets and participate in our monthly packet brainstorming calls. Special thanks to the Brainstorming Lab Crew - Samantha Dickerson, DRE at Chalice UU Fellowship of the Conejo Valley, CA, Jenni Papp, DRE at the UU Fellowship of Wayne County, OH and a few of you!! for their great suggestions each month.

Thanks also to the other [Soul Matters Team](#) members who contribute to the content and shape of these packets:

Rev. Michelle Collins, Soul Matters Small Group & Special Projects Researcher

Rev. Scott Tayler, Soul Matters Team Lead



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