

## **CREATING HOME**

### *A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This program is an adaptation for the West Cummington Congregational Church’s “Kids”Church” of one the Unitarian Universalist Association’s “Tapestry of Faith” curricula of its religious education program. See [www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/creatinghome/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/creatinghome/index.shtml). This adaptation attempts to follow the themes of the UU program while eliminating the religious symbols that are particular to UU religious teaching.

The UU materials say about its “Creating Home”: “It is a journey from home. It is a journey to home. Welcome home. This program helps children develop a sense of home that is grounded in faith. Together with your group you will ask questions about the purpose of having a home and the functions a home serves, for us as humans and for other animals. The program speaks of home as a place of belonging and explores the roles each of us play in the homes where we live. The program introduces the concept of a “faith home” — your congregation — which shares some characteristics with a family home. Like a family home, a faith home offers its members certain joys, protections, and responsibilities.”

#### **PROGRAM GOALS**

Creating Home will:

- Guide participants to identify the characteristics of a home and the functions a home serves
- Help participants articulate and affirm the location and the members of their individual family homes
- Provide opportunities for participants to observe homes in nature and investigate how different kinds of animal homes provide security and sustenance for their inhabitants
- Build participants’ vocabulary of faith and religious language
- Draw connections between participants’ family home experiences and the roles, responsibilities, and rewards of belonging to a “faith home”

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- Help develop participants' sense of belonging in their Creating Home group and in the larger congregation
- Provide multiple opportunities for participants to practice artistic self-expression and have fun.

### **A NOTE ON STRUCTURE**

This WCCC program, part of our "Kids' Church," will be held in the Parish House at 27 Main Street, West Cummington and be aimed at children aged 6 and above. Our goal is to have two volunteer teachers for each session, which will typically start when these children leave the new church building at about 9:50AM on those Sundays on which church services are held. Each Sunday session of Kids' Church will end at approximately 11:00AM, when parents will rejoin their children after their church service is over. Each session will provide several alternative activities and stories, the choice of which will be left up to the individual teachers.

Sharing the Parish House space at the same time will be children under six supervised by a paid child-care worker. The introductory and final parts of each session will be jointly held with these younger children, but the "Creating Home" part of the morning will served only those 6 and older.

Each session would have six parts:

1. Opening ritual (candle lighting) and moment of silence/prayer (5 min.) (with younger children)
2. Joys & concerns (including snack/beverage) (15 min.)(with younger children)
3. Introduction of home theme (5 min.)(separate from younger children)
4. Story/activity based on theme (25 min.)(separate from younger children)
5. Closing circle (5min.)(with younger children)
6. Cleaning up time (everyone helping).

### **SESSION 1: ON THE THRESHOLD: December 9th**

This session is the threshold of a journey that leaders and participants will take together, an exploration of the spiritual sense of home. In Session 1, children will learn the word "threshold" and investigate its meaning, beginning with the threshold of the program meeting space.

## GOALS

This session will:

- Begin to develop participants' sense of belonging to and contributing to this Creating Home community
- Introduce a "threshold" as a place of entrance and exit
- Introduce the idea of journeying from and returning to home

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Practice ritual together using the name stones
- Experience symbols by choosing and decorating a name stone to represent themselves
- Physically explore the concepts of threshold, journey, and return,
- Learn the term "family home" and describe their own family home

## SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	10
Activity 1: Home and Back Again	5
Activity 2: Story — The Magic Vase	5
Activity 4: Our Name Stones	10
Activity 6: Decorating the Threshold	15

## **SESSION 2: MORE ON THE IDEA OF THRESHOLD – December 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Session 2 of Creating Home will continue to explore the idea of threshold, using the activities from Session 1 that were omitted.

## GOALS

This session will:

- Help participants understand what a symbol is

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- Deepen participants' understanding of the threshold as an important place in the faith home and the family home
- Help participants connect opening and closing spiritual practices with practices of their faith home

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Participants will:

- \* Continue the work of Session 1.

### **SESSION 3: ANIMAL HOMES – December 30<sup>th</sup>**

This session explores other animal homes found in nature including nests, burrows, and dens. Each of these animal homes serves a particular set of functions for its inhabitants. A nest allows a bird to fly to and from home. A burrow allows a chipmunk to collect and save seeds fallen to the ground. Taking the time to observe these homes and discuss their functions will take us on another phase of our journey.

Another important element of this session is the homes we create for animals we use in agriculture. Children often do not understand the connection between their macaroni and cheese and the cow that gave the milk that then became the cheese. In this session, children will learn about human stewardship of farm animals by focusing on the homes we provide for the animals that provide us with food.

### **GOALS**

This session will:

- Introduce participants to the diversity of animals in our world
- Help participants see parallel functions in animal homes and our family homes
- Guide participants to appreciate that animals and humans share the world

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Participants will:

- Understand that wild animals build their own homes for specific functions

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- Be able to identify the words "burrow," "den," and "nest"
- Practice appreciation of the natural beauty of wild animals' homes
- Identify farm animals and learn how we, as humans, fulfill our stewardship by creating homes for them to live in

### **SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE**

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Lizard's Song	10
Activity 2: Who Shares the Barn Home?	18
Activity 3: Burrow, Den, or Nest	12
Activity 4: Wild Animal Matching Puzzles	10
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Farm Animal Interactive Story — It Could Be Worse	10

### **SESSION 4: HEARTH AND HOME – January 6th**

In this session, we will look at the ancient human need for the fire of a hearth to give us physical warmth and nourishment. Children will delve into the central story, "How Coyote Stole Fire," using puppets, discussion, and a pass-the-firestick game.

While participants explore the literal hearth, a broader concept of "hearth" also informs this session. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary offers an alternate definition of the word [hear](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hearth) (at [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hearth](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hearth)) "a vital or creative center." The activities will help children identify the relationships, feelings, and learning they find in the vital, creative center that their own family home provides.

### **GOALS**

This session will:

- Explore how the act of gathering together unites the members of a family home
- Demonstrate how good relationships within our homes help us work and learn together

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- Explore the relationships between humans and animals
- Engage participants in an investigation of why warmth is an important part of family and faith homes

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Participants will:

- Make a hearth to take home
- Hear a Native American story of Coyote and fire that emphasizes the warmth needed by all humans
- Retell the story, using puppets
- Explore flames
- Participate in a relay that emphasizes working together
- Optional: Participate in an activity that joins their faith with aid to animals

**SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE**

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: A Home Hearth	25
Activity 2: Story — How Coyote Stole Fire	5
Activity 3: Making Coyote Finger Puppets	15
Activity 4: Singing "This Little Light of Mine"	5
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Candlestick Fruit Salad	10
Alternate Activity 2: Clay Animals	15
Alternate Activity 3: Fire Stick Relay	15

**SESSION 5: BOOK OF RUTH – January 13<sup>th</sup>**

Today's session is about choosing and establishing homes. Establishing a home with a mother-in-law or a friend might seem unusual. However, love and loyalty can be unpredictable. Millions of children in our country are living in homes that reflect a picture different from the mother/father/biological children nuclear family. Whatever their own family makeup, all the children in the group live in a world with increasingly diverse family structures. They will have friends who live with grandparents or with a cousin. Affirming that families can be nurturing and strong with any structure is crucial to raising respectful and empathetic children and adults.

Aside from choosing whom we embrace as family, the stories in this session also touch on choice and necessity as reasons people move from one home or family to another. In this session, children are invited to share their stories about moving to a new home (Activity 2: Moving) and to present and tell about their own transitional objects (Alternate Activity 1: Show and Tell).

## **GOALS**

This session will:

- Illuminate aspects of moving and re-establishing family homes
- Help children recognize that people decide where to make their home based on many factors, including loyalties to people or places; family history; the need to live near work, food, and water; and a desire to be close to people or places with whom we feel connected
- Provide a space for children to share their stories and feelings about moving

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Participants will:

- Have an opportunity to share personal stories about moving and re-establishing home
- Hear and reflect upon stories of others who have moved and re-established home
- Play a game centered on making pairs, connecting identical and then related images of objects and people
- Make a bracelet to give to a friend

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- Optional: Have an opportunity to show and tell about a "transitional object" that they love
- Optional: Help provide for some of the needs of homeless people

**SESSION-AT-A-GLANCE**

ACTIVITY	MINUTES
Opening	5
Activity 1: Story — Ruth and Naomi	10
Activity 2: Moving	10
Activity 3: Memory Game	12
Activity 4: Story — Owen and Mzee	10
Activity 5: Friendship Bracelets	18
Closing	5
Alternate Activity 1: Show and Tell	15
Alternate Activity 2: New Home	15