



# JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO COMMUNITY STORY

## This lesson's Big Ideas:

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

## Lesson Materials

- Eight containers labeled with numbers 1-8
- Several copies of Random Story Elements 1-8 cut into slips and put in the appropriately numbered bowl
- Flip chart and markers
- 16-20 books from the Families All Matter Book Project reading curriculum ([www.amazeworks.com](http://www.amazeworks.com))

## TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

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

- adapted from D. Wolpe's

*Teaching Your Children About God*

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

-Erma Bombeck

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

-Desmond Tutu

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

- Thomas Moore

**YOUR FIELD  
EXPERIENCES:  
FEEDBACK AND  
NOTES**

**GATHERING AND FOCUSING**

🕒 2-3 minutes

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

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

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE  
SO MANY POSSIBILITIES: RANDOM  
FAMILY TALES**

🕒 10-15 minutes

In eight different bowls (or baskets or boxes), you will find slips of paper containing elements of a story about a family. Following the order of the bowls (1 through 8), children will draw out random elements which you, the workshop leader, or a volunteer child, will record as a story on a flip chart for the benefit of the class. Older classes, for whom writing is not a difficult class, can record the story on their own "Random Story Page". Encourage embellishment, inviting volunteers to supply you with names, adjectives, and details about the people and homes featured in each random story.

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

1. **Once upon a time**
2. **there was a man** ("Bobbie, describe the man for us...")
3. **who fell in love with a woman** ("Mackenzie, add some details about this woman...")
4. **and moved into a house** ("Chris, what was their house like...?")
5. **and decided to adopt a boy (etc...)**
6. **and then Grandpa moved in** ("I wonder why? Who's got an idea?")
7. **and lived for many years in a home filled with love**

As the children feed these basic elements, you can encourage the class to flesh out the story. You may end up with this tale written out on the flip chart or on the individual story page....

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

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

### Wondering Together

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

If the group really enjoys this, invite them to draw out a second story and embellish it.

## **PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO**

### **STORYBOOK SHARING**

🕒 20-25 minutes

In the classroom, we'll have many titles from the **Families All Matter Book Project**, a curriculum that affirms and celebrates all kinds of families and introduces readers to such important issues as interracial families, adoptive families, divorce, mental illness, socioeconomic challenges, gay and lesbian family members and death of a family member.

- On the days when the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders have Story Workshop, we'll vote on a few titles to read together as a class.
- On the days when the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders are in class, the children will pair up (groups of three are okay, too), select two or three books and read to each other.
- On Sundays when the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders are in workshop, they will select two titles and take them to the preschool Spirit Play classrooms (and possibly the nursery) at 9:50, 11:50 and 5:20, respective to each service to read them to a young audience. Again, the questions provided will help the older children engage the young children in talk about the books.

## Wondering Together

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

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

## **CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING**

🕒 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, assume a comfortable meditative position or take each other's hands. Speak these words, or words like them, the children repeating each line after you, the teacher.

May all families grow strong,  
May our church be a place that welcomes all families  
May all families grow strong.

## **RANDOM STORY ELEMENTS**

**1  
ONCE UPON A TIME...**

**2  
THERE WAS A WOMAN...  
THERE WAS A MAN...**

**3  
WHO FELL IN LOVE WITH A MAN...  
WHO FELL IN LOVE WITH A WOMAN...  
WHO WAS HAPPY WITHOUT ANOTHER GROWN UP**

**4  
AND MOVED INTO AN APARTMENT  
AND MOVED INTO A HOUSE**

**5  
AND DECIDED TO ADOPT A BOY  
AND DECIDED TO ADOPT A GIRL  
AND HAD A BABY BOY  
AND HAD A BABY GIRL  
AND DECIDED NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN**

**6  
AND THEN GOT DIVORCED AND LIVED IN DIFFERENT HOUSES  
AND DECIDED TO ADOPT A BOY  
AND DECIDED TO ADOPT A GIRL  
AND HAD A BABY BOY  
AND HAD A BABY GIRL  
AND DECIDED NOT TO HAVE MORE CHILDREN  
AND THEN GRANDPA MOVED IN**

**7  
AND THEN GRANDMA MOVED IN  
AND THEN DECIDED TO WELCOME A FOSTER CHILD INTO THEIR HOME  
AND DECIDED TO ADOPT A BOY  
AND DECIDED TO ADOPT A GIRL  
AND HAD A BABY BOY  
AND HAD A BABY GIRL  
AND DECIDED NOT TO HAVE MORE CHILDREN**

**8  
AND LIVED FOR MANY YEARS IN A HOME FILLED WITH LOVE.**