

# Earth-Centered Traditions

## Lesson 8: Animism, Polytheism, and Monotheism

4.8.2018

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**Objectives:** Explore monotheism, polytheism, and animism as they relate to nature.

**Materials:** Laptop setup, song lyric handout, blank cards, worship program copies.

**Time allotments** are suggested and meant to be adapted for **75 minute class**.

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### 1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins):

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
  - ▶ List some words that begin with the prefix “mono-” and “poly-.”
  - ▶ From your most recent worship (likely Easter Family Sunday, April 1), what’s one thing that you remember as interesting or meaningful?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.
- **Please take a few minutes to invite reflections from youth about their recent worship experience. Use copies of worship programs as helpful reminder.**

### 2. Silly Fun: Guess Who? (5 minutes max)

Give each youth 2 blank cards to write 2 little known facts about themselves. (Teachers included, too!) For example: *I was born exactly at midnight, I am ambidextrous, I have gone hiking in the Swiss Alps.* Teacher collects and mixes cards in a basket, then draws one card at a time and reads aloud for youth to guess whose fact it is. (Please don’t guess aloud if it’s your own card!) See who guesses the most correctly.

### 3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: “We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”

**Teacher reads:** (from author and radical environmentalist, Derrick Jensen)

*“If we are to survive, we must learn a new way to live, or relearn an old way. There have existed... many cultures whose members refuse to cut the vocal cords of the planet... [These] cultures listen attentively (as though their lives depend on it, which of course they do) to what plants, animals, rocks, rivers, and stars have to say, and that these cultures have been able to do what we can only dream of, which is to live in dynamic equilibrium with the rest of the world.”*

4. **Joys and Sorrows** (10 minutes): Listening is a precious gift that we offer one another at church. Using the balance scale and the blue (sorrows) and yellow (joys) stones, invite youth to share a joy and/or a sorrow from the past week, as a way of *meeting* one another with our lives and *sharing* in community. You will want to set limits (e.g. two stones max per person) so that no one monopolizes sharing time.

Each Sunday, a copy of the congregation's *Embracing Meditation* will be made available to your class. Share this information, putting in stones for those whose names are being spoken in the Sanctuary.

5. **PowerPoint presentation: Animism, Polytheism, and Monotheism** (46 minutes)

Follow the lesson plan in the PowerPoint presentation, with teachers facilitating discussion along the way.

**\*Note: To help track time, a suggested time allotment for each slide is listed on the upper right corner.**

6. **Questions for Discussion** (14 minutes)

- Having considered three belief systems that help sort through earth-centered traditions, what remains important is the sacredness of the earth and nature. What makes the earth sacred for you?
- In the song, "The Colors of the Wind," the rocks and trees and mountains all have voices. Can you *literally* hear the voice of water in the language/words we use to describe water: "Splash"... "Gush"... "Wash"... "Rush"? What is the connection between these words and nature's voice? (*Hint: think about onomatopoeias, those words that mean exactly the sounds they make.*)

7. **Say goodbye until next time:** Extinguish the chalice, saying together:

*"May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts."*

8. **Help clean up classroom** before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- return blue/yellow stones to containers
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets