

Lesson on Celebration of New Lives

Materials Needed:

Large Basket with:

Cup of water (teacher should fill just before lesson)

Cup of earth

Artificial Candle

Two baby dolls, African-American and Caucasian, wrapped in blankets

Enough silk roses for the entire class and the two baby dolls

White felt underlay, 36" in diameter.

When children are ready in circle, begin the lesson.

Presentation:

Now, watch carefully where I go to get the lesson.

Walk all the way around the circle back to the lesson shelf and remove the basket with the materials.

Ah, here it is.

Place basket to your side.

This lesson is in a basket. Lots of things come in baskets. People carry bread in baskets, and flowers, and sometimes even babies. Baskets can hold special gifts for us.

Now we are ready for our lesson on the Celebration of New Lives Ceremony.

This is the circle of our community.

Point around circle of children. Then take white underlay from basket and spread it out on floor in front of you, smoothing it down.

This is the circle of our Unitarian Universalist community. Each time a new child comes into a family, either by birth or by adoption, it's a reason to celebrate. We have a celebration for big kids, too. This one is the celebration of new babies. Raise your hand if you were a baby once...

Cradle the baby in your arms.

The Celebration of New Lives ceremony is a special time when we learn each new baby's name, we bless them in special ways, and we promise to be a church that will love and care for them as they grow. Parents bring their babies to church and invite their friends and family to share in this important day. This is the lesson we will do today.

Here are the things we use in our special Ceremony.

Show the children the cup of water.

This is the water of creation, the water of community.

Water is very important for all living things. We use water to drink, water to wash.

We swim in water. Our bodies are made mostly of water. Water keeps us alive.

We were carried inside our mother's wombs in water. Without water, we could not live, plants could not live, animals could not live. In our Unitarian Universalist church, we gather water from all over when we come together again after being away from each other for the summer. And we use this

water as a sign of our naming when we welcome babies and children into the church.

This is the water of creation, the water of community, the water that is the source of all life.

*Feel water again in bowl.
Pick up one rose from basket.*

This is the flower that reminds us of the beauty of our lives and how it grows and unfolds as we grow.

We welcome babies and children into the community of our Unitarian Universalist church with water. We welcome babies and children with a rose. We will use a baby doll to see how this is done.

Pick up one of the baby dolls from the basket. Hold with head in your hand and body along forearm so that your second hand is free. The assistant teacher can hold the second baby doll if you'd like to repeat the ritual for both babies.

Our Ministers dedicate the new babies and the big kids at our church.

And now we bless them with water, earth, fire, air and beauty.

Take the cup of water. Dip a finger in the water and place a drop across the baby dolls' brows.

We bless you with water. May you always be refreshed and sustained.

Dip your finger in the earth. Smudge a little on the baby dolls' brows or cheeks.

We bless you with earth. May you always feel connected to the land and feel the wonder of the world around you.

Hold the lit artificial candle in front of the baby dolls' eyes.

We bless you with fire. May the light of truth guide you and the warmth of love surround you.

Blow gently on the baby dolls' heads.

We bless you with air. May your breath and voice bring truth and justice into the world.

Take a rose and brush it across the babies' cheeks.

We bless you with beauty. May your life unfold with all the grace and loveliness of this flower.

Hold baby up with both hands and move in a circular motion to each child in the circle as one motion.

And now comes the part when we name the babies. When we celebrate new babies, the Minister holds each baby and then asks the parents:

"What name have you chosen for this child?"

Can you repeat that with me?

“What name have you chosen for this child?”

Then, the parents hold the baby and speak his name or her name. I wonder, what is the name given to this child? Names are very important. What name will we choose for this child?

Wait for children to give a name for each baby doll. Accept the first names you hear. Adjust pronouns to he or she as needed by name chosen.

(Name chosen), we name you as your parents have named you, born one more redeemer.

(Name chosen), we name you as your parents have named you, born one more redeemer.

And then the congregation reads words out loud together. If we were the congregation, the Ministers would ask us: Do you, the members and friends of the Spirit Play class at the Unity Church - Unitarian, promise to help this child grow in body, mind and spirit? Do you promise to make a place for this baby in your hearts so that this baby may grow in knowledge, in spirit, and in peace? And we all answer: We will.

Will you promise?

Wait for children to answer.

For the gift of childhood, whose wonder, laughter and tears keep the world young, we all rejoice and give thanks. We hope and pray that (Name

Chosen) and whomever (his/her) life may touch, might have a life made strong through love, radiant with hope and blessed with happiness.

Now let's imagine that each of us is being Celebrated like in the New Lives Ceremony. This is just a practice and we'll give back the roses so that other classes can play New Lives.

Take rest of roses from basket. You will name each child in turn around the circle, beginning with yourself, dip the rose in water and touch his or her forehead. Place flower before them on underlay with stem toward center or they can hold it.

(Name yourself first) Remember the day of your naming.

(Name), we welcome you. *(all the children can repeat this together)* May your life unfold with all the beauty of this flower.

Wondering Questions:

I wonder what part of the story you liked the best?

I wonder what part is most important?

I wonder where you are in the story?

I wonder if there is any part of the story that we can leave out and still have all the story we need?

Put the lesson away slowly and carefully, modeling for the class.