

JOURNEY IN... YEAR ONE

DIVINE WITHIN SCIENCE

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- All human beings are a union of flesh and spirit. There are many words and metaphors that help us talk about the soul as *enfleshed* or flesh as *ensouled*.
- Within every human being, there is something of the Divine. All bodies and minds house a holy spark.

Lesson Materials

- Magazine photos of various things, living and inanimate, affixed to card stock and cut out
- Regular latex party balloons (check for latex allergies)
- Mini-trampoline
- Microscope
- Prepped slides of human blood

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Our body is precious. It is a vehicle for awakening.
- Buddha

Nobody knows what the soul is.

It comes and goes

like the wind over the water ~
sometimes, for days,
you don't think of it.

- from "Maybe" by Mary Oliver

Each person is born with an unencumbered spot, free of expectation and regret, free of ambition and embarrassment, free of fear and worry, an umbilical spot of grace where we were first touched by God. it is this spot of grace that issues peace.

Psychologists call this spot the *psyche*. Theologists call it the *soul*. Jung calls it the *seat of the unconscious*. Hindu masters call it the *atman*. Buddhists call it the *dharma*. Rilke calls it *inwardness*. Sufis call it *qualb* and Jesus calls it the *center of our love*.

To know this spot of inwardness is to know who we are, not by surface markers of identity, not by where we work or what we wear or how we like to be addressed but by feeling our place in relation to the Infinite and inhabiting it.

- from Mark Nepo, as quoted in
Laura Remen's *Knowing God*

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

-
-
-
-

YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

-
-
-
-

Note: This science lesson is a series of many short activities. It will require a lot of skillful transitioning between activities; the series of metaphors will help. Do as many activities as you can manage while still leaving plenty of time for wondering together.

GATHERING AND FOCUSING

⌚ 10 minutes

Part 1: Alive or Not Alive?

Engage the kids in the Big Ideas with this quick sorting activity. Sort a pile of images on cardstock into categories of Alive and Not Alive. Ask the kids how we know the difference. Older kids might know the scientific criteria for living organisms: (1) self-bounded (discrete, requiring nutrients from an environment), (2) self-generating (grows), and (3) self-perpetuating (reproduces).

Are there any grey areas that the kids know of?

Part 2: Voting

On a chalkboard or flipchart, have your class (alone or in combination with the results of prior classes) vote on which idea they like best for the idea of aliveness or the Divine Within us? What's inside every human being? Is it...

1. a spark of Life?
2. the breath of Life?
3. Life flowing in our veins?
4. other? (explain)

PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE SOUL AS GODSPARK

⌚ 10-15 minutes

- Show the kids the image of The Creation of Adam from Michelangelo's ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Ask questions about the image:
 - Who do you think the images in the painting are supposed to be?
 - What's going on, in your opinion?
 - If a scientist were trying to guess how this man was being brought to life, what do you think she or he would guess?
- In Sunday School, we're talking about bodies and spirits. Some peo-

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

-
-
-
-

ple think of the soul or spirit as a spark of something bigger. Some use the word godspark to describe what's inside us.

- What words have you heard people use to talk about what makes our bodies and minds alive?
- Do people have sparks in them? Have you ever felt electrical?
- Experiment with the human body's ability to hold an electrical charge with these two activities:
 - Use friction to create a charge in an inflated latex balloon. Older children may understand that electrons have positive and negative charges. Rubbing separates the two forces, attracting lots of negative charge to the surface of the balloon. Negative ions on the balloon are attracted to the positive ions on your body, so we can make the balloon stick to us.
 - Allow children to shuffle sockfooted around a mini-trampoline, building a static charge. When they touch the fingertips of a classmate, as in the fresco, they will likely feel a spark of energy. This will only work in dry rooms.

Wondering Together

- I wonder why people have some electricity in them?
- I wonder what you think makes people come alive?
- What do you think a human soul might be made of? Do you like the idea of a spark of God? What other ideas come to mind?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO SOUL AS BREATH

⌚ 10-15 minutes

- Some people, including Christians, believe that human beings came alive when God the Creator breathed the breath of life into their nostrils.

Wondering Together

- What do you think of this idea?
- Is breathing what makes us alive?
- Can humans be alive without breathing? Are there other organisms that can live without breathing?
- Using an inspirometer, we can measure how much of the 'breath of life' our young bodies can hold. Allow each child to try to measure his or her lung capacity using the inspirometer. Be sure to wipe the mouthpiece with a waterless sanitizing solution in between children.
 - Is this a measure of how alive we are?
 - Can we measure our soul?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO

SOUL AS LIFE BLOOD

⌚ 10-15 minutes

- Share the following bit of UU history with the children, using words you think they'll understand:

Michael Servetus, one of the earliest Unitarians, lived in Europe in the 16th century. He was a doctor and theologian. Servetus, as a scientist and spiritual person, believed that the soul of a human being was in the blood. According to the Biblical tradition, the soul was infused by God into man's nostrils through the breathing. Since the breathing has the purpose of purifying the blood, Servetus understood why the Hebrew tradition postulates that the soul is in the blood. Servetus thought that, if the soul is in the blood, the best way to understand its journey through the human body was to study the blood circulation

- from www.miguelervet.org

Wondering Together

- I wonder why people need blood?
 - Can we live without blood?
 - What happens to us if we lose blood?
 - Does Michael Servetus' idea make sense to you? Why?
 - Have you ever looked at your blood?
- Using prepped slides, give the kids a chance to look at blood under a microscope. Waiting children can color in the blood cell coloring sheet.
 - Do you see anything you recognize?
 - Do you see anything that makes you think of the human soul?
 - If Michael Servetus had a microscope, do you think he might have changed his mind about blood?
 - What kind of scientific instrument would you invent to help us learn about the human soul?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

⌚ 2 minutes

Teach the children the greeting word, *namaste* (pronounced evenly: nah-mah-stay). This Pali word translates as, "The Divine within me sees and greets the Divine within you." Generally, the word is spoken with a gesture which the Thai culture names *wai*: the hands, pressed together, are held just above the heart and the head is bowed to meet the tips of the fingers.

Give the children time to say goodbye to each other and their Guide with this beautiful gesture.