

# JOURNEY IN... YEAR THREE

## THE DIVINE WITHIN

### MUSIC

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- 'Practice' implies having the discipline and commitment to do something over and over again until it becomes second nature. Artistic, musical, athletic and language skills are all things that demand practice, as kids know well.
- It takes practice to establish a strong connection to the divine presence within us and in our lives. We call this sort of effort 'spiritual practice'.
- Each person can find a spiritual practice that helps cultivate inner balance and depth. There are plenty of options to choose from, drawing from many traditions and schools of thought.

#### Lesson Materials

- Set of 20 colored handbells
- Handbell cue cards
- Color-coded music for a song for handbells

#### TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Don't put anything else into your mouth, like your projects, your worries, your fear, just put the carrot in. And when you chew, chew only the carrot, not your projects or your ideas.

– Thich Nhat Hanh

Do you have a body? Don't sit on the porch! Go out and walk in the rain!

– Kabir

At the end of his spiritual talks, Gurdjieff said "Amen." When asked to translate "Amen," one of Gurdjieff's closet pupils answered, "Give it a try!"

– Michel Legris

Any act that protects life is sacred. Technology that is dedicated to life-saving purposes acquires sanctity as well, and its use becomes a holy act.

– Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Every act done in the sunlight of awareness becomes sacred.

– Thich Nhat Hanh

Every time you pick up a piece of trash along the road, say to yourself, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the house of the Lord."

– Edward Hays in *Psalms for Zero Gravity*

This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God.

– Walt Whitman

If you keep your practice steady, morning and night, summer and winter, there is nothing you cannot do and nothing that can harm you.

– from the *Upasakashila Sutra*

What is your preferred spiritual practice? How would you describe your commitment to it? What benefits do you reap? Are there any habits or acts in your life that are unrecognized spiritual practices?

Did you understand spiritual practice as a child? Imagine the gift you are giving your students, sharing this idea with them, offering them possible tools to find and keep their balance throughout their life!

### TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

- You might find the word **discipline** a helpful tool, but be sure to clarify that in this sense, the word discipline doesn't mean that we punish ourselves. Discipline comes from an old word that means "teaching". When we commit to a new discipline, it means we're teaching ourselves something new.

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### YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

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## GATHERING AND FOCUSING

⌚ 5-10 minutes

Check in: Is anyone learning how to play a new instrument? How often do you practice? For how long? What do you do when you practice?

## PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE HANDCHIME PRACTICE

⌚ 40-50 minutes

Practice is absolutely necessary if a person wants to become a good musician. But did you know that you have to practice if you want to become a person who is spiritually balanced and connected to the divine presence inside you? There are lots of different kinds of spiritual practice, but no matter which one you choose, you have to make a promise to yourself to work on it often and make it part of who you are. Some spiritual practices you could do every day include meditation, prayer, yoga, volunteering, eating mindfully, chanting...even singing or playing music!

We're going to commit to practicing something together now. We'll have to do it over and over again until we get good at picking the right notes and playing them at the right time.

We'll make a bell choir and play and sing a song together! To play a bell, we first have to commit to three easy rules:

- We only play our bell when it's the right time to sound that note.
- We play and handle our instruments gently, always setting them down somewhere safe when we're not playing them.
- We silence our bells by touching them gently with two fingers.

Everyone will get one or two bells (one may be plenty for younger children, two are easily managed by older children). Early elementary children will play the melody by following a series of cards (be careful to keep them in the right order). Older children who are readers will get music with color-coded notes; they can play a slightly more challenging version. Any song from a bell book will work: "This Little Light of Mine" is a simple, familiar choice.

Before attempting to play the bells, the class may need to sing the song together several times. Teachers can test to see if they remember the

words by singing a line but leaving a word out, letting the kids fill in the missing word. Two songs are included with the lesson: a simpler song for young groups, a more complex song for older groups.

Practice the song several times through. **Can the group practice it enough so that they can play it without the cue cards or sheet music?** Encourage the kids to play it until it's exactly right and then play for an audience of parents or preschool classes.

## **PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO**

### **MUSICAL SIMON**

🕒 (any extra minutes you need to fill, or as a substitute activity for younger classes for whom the bell choir is too difficult)

You'll need two sets of color-coded handbells. We'll play a game like "Simon" using the bells. The teacher will be "Simon" and will play a tune, note by note, inviting the kids to play it back.

Eight children can play this at a time using an octave of bells. It's best not to use sharp notes in this game. The others can watch and help and then have a turn. Begin with the first note and have the corresponding child play his or her bell. Repeat the first note and add a second note. Wait for the playback. If it's correct, play the first and second note and then add a third. If the playback is incorrect, go back to the last series of notes that was played successfully to review. Continue in the same fashion until you complete a ten- or twenty-note sequence, depending on the age group.

Try this ten-note sequence for starters, then feel free to make up your own:

Red, Yellow, Blue, High Red, Purple, Indigo, Green, Orange, Red

### **Wondering Together (these questions will work for either or both activities)**

- I wonder if you've ever been so focused while listening or playing music that you 'got lost' in the song? What did it feel like?
- I wonder why we so often have to do something over and over again to get good at it?
- I wonder what the world would be like if no one practiced their musical instrument until they were good at it?
- I wonder what happens to our regular thoughts when we're doing the same thing over and over again? Were you thinking about something else while we were playing?
- I wonder why some people give up practicing something?
- I wonder if practicing an instrument might help you connect to the divine presence inside you?
- I wonder where the music comes from when a person writes a new song?
- I wonder if music is the right spiritual practice for any of us? Would you pick music over t'ai chi or over calligraphy or over poetry?

## **CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING**

🕒 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, take each other's hands and speak these words:

Deep peace of the running wave to you.  
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.  
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.  
Deep peace of the infinite peace to you.