

Worship Weaving
A middle school curriculum

Written with support of the Unitarian Sunday School Society

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Introduction

“Worship Weaving” is a 12-session curriculum for middle schoolers, intended for those in grades 6-8 or homeschool equivalent.

The goals of "Worship Weaving" are for middle schoolers to:

- explore and enjoy the different components of worship, including ritual, music and chant, prayer and meditation, reading sacred texts, and altars and the visual
- learn about resources for creating rituals and worship
- gain experience leading worship for themselves and others

Each session shares the same structure, including a worship component, a discovery time of learning about new terms or practices, and a main activity on the topic of the week. The worship includes a song, short ritual with movement such as a Sun Salutation, and chalice extinguishing that is initially led by the facilitator, and over time, shifts to being led by the participants.

During Worship Weaving, participants will experience a ritual closing. This closing will remain the same throughout the curriculum, allowing participants to develop comfort in the experience, and eventually, in leading it for their peers. The suggested ritual includes music and movement in order to help participants integrate their learning through physical as well as verbal intelligences. The group is also encouraged to synchronize their breathing through both the Sun Salutation and singing, a practice used in many traditions to help a group feel bonded and connected to the Sacred. The ritual pieces have also been selected to give participants exposure to various religious backgrounds, both to increase their cultural literacy and comfort, and to show some of the many possibilities available for a personal or group spiritual practice.

Shalom Chaverim, a traditional Jewish song, is a round included in Singing the Living Tradition. “The Hebrew words mean ‘Peace, friends, until we meet again’ and are used as a greeting or farewell. This song became popular in the Jewish colonies in Palestine after World War II.” (from Between the Lines: Sources for Singing the Living Tradition) A round allows the group more musical possibilities. At first, they may want to simply sing it as written. As they come to know the song better, they may use it as a round or add simple harmonies to deepen their worship experience.

The Sun Salutation is a well-known and loved yoga practice with many subtle variations. It is designed to provide a morning routine for stretching the whole body, aligning breath and movement, and honoring our life-giving Sun. Many online videos are available, including this simplified version:

http://www.ehow.com/video_2351062_yoga-sun-salutation-routine.html

Worship Weaving uses an inclusive, multicultural lens. Unitarian Universalism strives to build communities in which multiple points of view are welcome and seen as enriching for the group. The authors intentionally use many modalities to address the wide range of learning styles and maturity levels of this age group, and include opening games to help youth build community, and open up both socially and spiritually.

Worship Weaving was developed in response to the heavier time pressures our high schoolers are facing. It moves content that was traditionally held during Coming of Age or High School Youth Group to the middle school level. This allows us to lighten the schedule for often over-committed older youth, and builds leadership skills among middle schoolers. We are excited to move this worship-leading material into our middle school program, just as they strive to make a developmental leap towards independence.

Please enjoy your teaching experience!

Mandy Neff and Sara Taetle Schwindt

Session 1: How do you connect to the Sacred?

Session Goals:

Participants will

- Create a covenant
- Begin bonding with the group
- Learn definitions of the terms religion, worship, sacred, holy and divine
- Explore personal preferences in worship

Leader Preparation:

- The terms sacred, holy and divine are used broadly in the context of this curriculum. Some participants may be comfortable using these terms already, and some not; youth may hold a range of beliefs or no belief in the Sacred themselves. At this age, middle schoolers frequently will wholly accept or reject their parent/caregivers' belief system, without exploration of nuances. For more on typical faith development stages, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faith_development_theory.
- Preview <http://www.myyogaonline.com/videos/yoga/royal-protocol-sun-salutations>
- Reflect on the following – look back on two moments when you felt especially close to your sense of the All or the divine. Often, UUs will gravitate towards a memory of an experience in a natural setting. Recall one of these if possible, and also a time when you would consider yourself experiencing the Sacred through a human creation, in the company of others, or in an urban setting.
- Begin your planning for the trip to attend a worship after Session 3. Determine if your group will attend a regular service of your congregation, or go on a visit, and share a Save the Date notice with families.

Materials List:

Chalice

Matches

Altar Cloth

Music player

Rejoice Together, Sources of Our Faith, or another compilation of readings owned by your congregation

Masking tape

Pizza ingredient index cards – see “Human Pizza” activity

Newsprint

Markers

Ball

Activities:

Opening 15 minutes

Place a beautiful cloth under the chalice and play some opening music about the sacred, such as Peter Mayer’s “Everything is Holy Now.”

Welcome the participants and give an overview of today’s schedule

Chalice lighting

In the beginning- silence

In the beginning- wonder

In the beginning- beauty

In the beginning- death...

Holy the mystery; holy the journey;

Holy the hour of prayer.

Blessed and merciful; blessed and generous;

Sacred as simple air....

Summoning duty, touch of compassion,

Keeper of song and flame;

Struggle and silence, praise and thanksgiving,
Truth beyond every name

In the beginning- on the horizon- Life!
-by Kendyl Gibbons

Explain Worship Weaving by giving a general overview of the whole course and its goals, such as the following:

Worship Weaving will teach participants about the different parts of worship so that they can appreciate worships they attend at a deeper level of understanding, and will give them the tools and experience to create their own worship service for others by the end of the session. Over the course of the next 12 weeks, participants will be asked to gradually take over the leadership of the worship roles during Worship Weaving. Next week they will be lighting the chalice, and in following weeks, leading the closing ritual as well. Select a chalice lighter for next week.

Share Rejoice Together edited by Helen Pickett or Sources of our Faith edited by Kathleen Rolenz and show participants the table of contents. Explain how your group will manage worship resources – will participants be able to take books home to research readings, and if so, for how long? Will they need to come early next week to select a reading?

Allow participants to check in, using your usual question, a talking object, or Rose-Bud-Thorn. In Rose-Bud-Thorn, participants share answers each of the three questions. The Rose is a joy, the Bud is something they are looking forward to or about to happen, and the Thorn is an issue or concern. Encourage everyone to take a turn, but ensure that participants are comfortable passing if they wish.

Group-building Game 10 minutes

Human Pizza

Make cards for all the ingredients of a pizza, as many copies as needed so each youth is an ingredient: crust, tomato sauce, cheese (add toppings for large groups!). Tape the cards to the youths' backs and they must assemble themselves in small groups, each with all the ingredients and toppings of a pizza by asking each other only yes-or-no questions.

From <http://www.radicalparenting.com/2008/07/12/ice-breakers-for-teens/#sthash.V51DAD7n.dpuf>

Our Covenant 20 minutes

Create a group covenant

If this group is very experienced with creating covenants, ask for their contributions first, and push them further to share *what will really work to help them feel safe* and able to have discussions about an often silent subject, worship and connecting with the Sacred? Ask them how they want this experience to feel different from school, if they attend school, or from other places in their life they may feel age discrimination or other pressures to conform.

If they are not familiar with this process, you can begin with a sample, and ask for changes and additions.

A sample covenant from the Tapestry of Faith curriculum Virtue Ethics:

- Start and end on time.
- Respect the space.
- Assume others' good will/best intentions.
- Honor diversity of identity, opinion, and approach.
- Keep personal sharing confidential.
- Share the floor; make space for the quieter voices.
- Apologize if you make a mistake.
- Speak up if someone else's behavior breaks the covenant.
- Do not feel the need to "fix" anyone or anything.

As you facilitate, write down their ideas on newsprint and capture as much of their language as possible, to help them feel a real sense of ownership of this covenant. Do not judge contributions, but record all, paying special attention to the contributions of quieter members. If you feel something is missing, be sure to add it, because as facilitator you are part of this group and must feel comfortable as well. Be sure to discuss the consequences of breaking the covenant as well.

Have everyone sign the document – colorful markers are fun – and post it in your space each time you meet.

For facilitators:

Please note that both this covenant and the structures of your RE program will be important tools for managing any issues that arise within the group. Referring back to the group agreement fairly often will help reinforce the group's commitment to each other and their mutual supportive behavior.

Definitions

10 minutes

worship – a group experience of religious practice designed to bring the community into a sacred space and time

religion – from the latin root *religare*, to bind back together. A cultural practice of beliefs about the nature of God.

sacred – something set apart from the everyday or consecrated, to address questions of an ultimate nature, such as the meaning of life and death, or good and evil, or related to God and a universal human impulse towards mercy, compassion and justice. Holy and divine are synonyms for sacred, but when capitalized, can be used as a metaphor for God or Gods.

Share the basic definitions by writing the terms up so they are visible for the activity, and reading the definitions aloud. Then have participants stand in a circle, and toss a ball to someone, calling out their name and one of the terms. They share the definition, then toss the ball to someone else and call out another word, until all have had a turn.

Spectrum Activity

Have participants create a line with one end representing “never” and the other “always.” “Sometimes” will be at the center.

Read the following statements and ask participants to move to the spot on the line that represents their answer. Stop occasionally during the exercise and ask people to share why they are standing where they are – or perhaps, why they think no one is standing in a certain spot!

Tell them:

The first set of questions are about your personal style and preferences. The second are on how you feel about different things we might do or topics we might explore within worship. We can use both of these preferences as we create and explore worship together, to build moments – and full worships – that are really meaningful for you.

Your personal style:

I like to write.

I like sports.

I like art.

I like to read non-fiction.

I like to read fiction.

I like being in nature.

I like being with groups of people.

I like to help people or animals who need me.

I like to cook.

I like to make sure justice is done in the world.

Your worship preferences:

I love worship.

I have been to an outdoor worship.

I like to sing with a group or in public.

I like to sing, for myself.

I like to be quiet.

I have prayed.

I like to talk with my friends.

I like to talk to adults about my day.

I feel like the minister here knows me.

I have a hard time understanding the word “spirituality.”

My friends outside of church misunderstand my religion.

I feel connected to other people.

I feel connected to the whole earth.

I believe in God.

I think of myself as a Unitarian Universalist.

I have volunteered somewhere this month.

I have stood up for someone in trouble this month.

I have created something beautiful this month.

Closing **15 minutes**

Lead the closing this week and next. Leadership handoff of the closing will begin in session 3.

Song – Shalom Chaverim, STLT # [?]

Sun Salutation

Make sure the group has enough space to lie down without touching each other. The group may all want to face inward in a circle, rather than create a “yoga class” feeling of rows facing a leader.

You can watch the following video (or many others online) to learn the Sun Salutation:

<http://www.myyogaonline.com/videos/yoga/royal-protocol-sun-salutations>

You may want to print a copy of the sequence of poses, such as the one below, to follow along with during the session:

<http://branchingstream.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Yoga-Sun-Salutation-Surya-Namaskar2.jpg>

Chalice extinguishing – use the same resource as chalice lighting, or the following words:

We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

SESSION TWO: EXPLORING AN ORDER OF WORSHIP

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) To evaluate how familiar youth already are with various aspects of the worship service**
- 2) To begin to establish a basis of comfort in using vocabulary of UU worship**

MATERIALS:

***A chalice, matches and a candle**

***Orders of service for several different types of church services: Sunday-morning service, Christmas-eve service, multigen vs. adult service, etc. If possible, get more than one copy of each**

*** Two hand-held white boards, two dry-erase markers and two rags or paper towels**

***A piece of newsprint and a marker**

SESSION OUTLINE

- I. OPENING (10-15 minutes)
 - a. Welcome the participants
 - b. Chalice lighting by participant
 - c. Select a chalice lighter for next week
 - d. Allow participants to check in, using your usual question or Rose-Bud-Thorn. In Rose-Bud-Thorn, participants share answers each of the three questions. The Rose is a joy, the Bud is something they are looking forward to or about to happen, and the Thorn is an issue or concern. Encourage everyone to take a turn, but ensure that participants are comfortable passing if they wish.

- II. EVALUATING PRE-EXISTING KNOWLEDGE (10-15 minutes)
 - a. Divide the youth and adults into two groups, or teams. Give each group a mini white board and a dry-erase marker and rag or paper towel. Tell them that each group will have two minutes to list as many elements of a worship service as they

can remember. For an added challenge, they can try to list them in order of when they occur in the service, but this isn't necessary.

- i. Some youth groups respond very well to a competitive game-like environment. If your youth group is one of these, you can time them for two minutes and assign a point to each service element that a given group remembers. You'll have to decide whether elements that recur at various points during the service will be good for different points; for example, are "opening hymn" and "closing hymn" one point each, or is "hymn" one point? If your youth group doesn't respond well to competition, or if you simply prefer not to do a competitive activity, this works just as well with having them simply list as many as they can.
- ii. At the end of the two minutes, have each group display their white board and choose one group to read one item off of its list. If the other group has the same item written on its list, both groups will circle or put a star by that item. Repeat with the other group. Continue doing this until both groups have read every item on their list. If one group has an item on its list that the other group doesn't, that group can add it to their list. While this is going on, an adult should be making a "master list" on newsprint that has the contributions from both groups on it.
- iii. If a service element is named and anyone in the group doesn't know what it is, take time to give a brief explanation. This is especially likely to happen if there's a youth or adult who used to go to a different congregation that does services differently. Remind the youth that while there are certain core elements common to most UU worship services, every congregation does things slightly differently and different doesn't mean right or wrong.

III. EXPLORING SEVERAL ORDERS OF WORSHIP (15 minutes)

- a. Bring out the orders of worship that you've collected and give the youth and adults three to five minutes to explore them. Encourage them to compare the orders of service with the list that the group has compiled. Use the following guiding questions:
 - i. Where do the different elements fall? Do you notice anything about the order—do the same things tend to happen in the same order regardless of the type of service? Are there certain elements of the service that are longer or shorter, or even nonexistent, in some services? (For example, a multigenerational service will likely have a play, story or activity in place of a sermon.)
 - ii. Are there any services that happen in different physical spaces—for example, a Blessing of the Animals service that takes place outside? Does this change in physical space have any effect on the elements in the order of service?

IV. SONG—*Shalom Chaverim*

- V. SUN SALUTATION (5 minutes for both Song and Sun Salutation)
- VI. CLOSING QUESTION (5 minutes)
 - a. Now that we've had three chalice lightings and three closing songs/rituals, how do you feel about them? How does it feel to know that Sunday mornings, while you're here, are set aside from your everyday activities? Do you look forward to it? Feel neutral? How do you feel afterward?
- VII. CHALICE EXTINGUISHING

SESSION 3: ATTENDING AND EVALUATING WORSHIP

SESSION GOALS

Participants will

- Experience a few different styles of an element of worship – for instance, hearing a music recording and then singing a hymn
- Evaluate the differences in style, and share their preferences
- Attend one or more worships to look for the elements they have identified
- Evaluate the elements they experienced

LEADER PREPARATION

Familiarize yourself with clfu.org, and choose a song you think your group will enjoy.

Familiarize yourself with the sections, hymn themes, and indices of *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Reflect on the following – what is your favorite moment in a worship? What does it mean to you or allow you to get in touch with?

MATERIALS

For Session 3:

Chalice

Matches

Newsprint

Markers

Music clip and playing device

Hymnals – one for each participant

Permission slips, if needed

For Field Trip:

Bingo Sheets

Pens

SESSION ACTIVITIES

Opening 15 minutes

Welcome the participants

Chalice lighting by participant

Select a chalice lighter for next week

Allow participants to check in, using your usual question or Rose-Bud-Thorn. In Rose-Bud-Thorn, participants share answers each of the three questions. The Rose is a joy, the Bud is something they are looking forward to or about to happen, and the Thorn is an issue or concern. Encourage everyone to take a turn, but ensure that participants are comfortable passing if they wish.

Exploring and Evaluating one Element of Worship 10-15 minutes

Explain:

Today we will be exploring one of the elements of worship we talked about last week. We'll be focusing on music for part of the session today, and even more in a later session. Let's listen together.

View a CLF music clip

Show participants the Church of the Larger Fellowship website, www.clfuu.org. Help them navigate to the worship archive and search for a song. Pathway: Click on the "Quest for Meaning" button, then Reflecting>Worship, then click on the Worship Archives button.

Try "Blue Boat Home," at 23:47 in the 9/23/13 Equinox service, or "This Little Light of Mine," at 40:50.

Show the group our hymnal and supplements, *Singing the Living Tradition*, *Las Voces del Camino*, or *Singing the Journey*. Sing the same hymn from the appropriate hymnal.

"Blue Boat Home" is #1064 in *Singing the Journey*. "This Little Light of Mine" is #118 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Encourage participants to sing out by having them stand in a circle and shake out before beginning.

Show participants the structure of *Singing the Living Tradition*, with music in the front and readings in the back. They may be especially interested in the hymn themes/categories, listed

both in the index and along the bottom of each page, as they begin to choose songs for worship. Also point out the sections for openings, chalice lightings, and closings for future use.

Show them the two supplements, if your congregation has them. Discuss that they were added in order to promote diversity both of music and of participants, in UU worship. Who do they think might have been the target audience of *Las Voces del Camino*? *Of Singing the Journey*?

How might they use certain resources to appeal to a certain group of worshippers?

Discuss how these two musical experiences were similar, and how different.

Which did each participant prefer? They can do a simple show of thumbs up or down, or share their opinion verbally if they are eager to.

Broaden the conversation to ask about similarities and differences between these two ways of experiencing a piece of music. Be sure to bring up the concept of participation as you discuss the differences. Ask: Did you enjoy sitting back and listening? Was it more contemplative? Did you enjoy singing for yourself and contributing to the group sound? How did it feel to receive, versus to participate? Which of these feels more worshipful to you? Can you think of another way to use music in worship? Might both of these styles be used, for different purposes, in one worship?

Preparing to Attend Worship 20-25 minutes

Create a bingo sheet for attending worship. Try the card generator, [Custom bingo cards with your own word or phrase lists](http://print-bingo.com), at <http://print-bingo.com>.

Ask: What do you think you might see, hear, experience in worship? If it's in your congregation? If it's online? If it's the service of another religion that meets in a building? If it's an indigenous religion that celebrates outdoors? What ties all these together as worship, as reaching for the divine?

Now, help the group focus on elements of worship. Remember the orders of worship from Session 2, as well as the answers they just discussed. Try to help the group phrase each element as an activity – such as, “praying with beads or mala,” rather than simply “beads or mala.”

Brainstorm possible elements with the group and write on newsprint for all to see. You will need at least twenty-five.

Group the ideas if necessary. Divide the ideas into even groups to create a bingo sheet with four to five columns. A template is available online at <http://print-bingo.com>, which can help create free bingo cards in several different layouts. You can type in your group's list of elements, and it will create several versions of the bingo cards with the words in different positions. You can do this in class, if time, do it later, or assign it to a participant. Be sure to have a deadline that gives enough time to make copies before attending worship.

The bingo sheet should serve as a jumping-off point for discussion and evaluation. At the bottom, add a few evaluation questions such as:

What was your favorite element?

What was the most successful element for you? The least? Why?

What might you do differently if you were leading the worship? The same?

Help the group come to agreement on 2-3 prompts or questions. Add them to your originals, and make enough copies for each participant to have one per worship you plan to attend.

Closing 15 minutes

Share logistical details about any field trips or changes in your meeting time to attend worship. Give out permission slips if necessary.

Lead the closing as detailed in Session 1. Take note of whether participants are feeling comfortable with the ritual, and if so, begin to share the leadership by inviting participants to take over leading one element per week.

Song

Sun Salutation

Chalice extinguishing

FIELD TRIP TO ATTEND WORSHIP

Attend worship as a group. If possible, attend two contrasting-style worships, such as a Sunday morning and a Wednesday night, Sacred Circle, or youth group worship. Play bingo as you participate!

Using the Bingo cards, do an evaluation of each immediately afterwards with your group. Ask the group to notice patterns – did everyone find certain elements successful or fun? Would they want to experiment with them in their own worship?

Make note of any favorites for future use. Collect sheets and keep them for the next session.

SESSION 4: RITUAL IN WORSHIP

SESSION GOALS

- 1) To define the terms “ritual” and “habit” and determine the degree to which ritual is necessary in the worship experience
- 2) To identify ritualistic areas in the worship service and discuss their unique purpose
- 3) To achieve youth ownership and empowerment by having the weekly session ritual become youth-led, rather than adult-led (? Does this need to be in there?)

MATERIALS

- 1) Two large pages of newsprint
- 2) Markers, Post-It notes and tape
- 3) Pens or pencils, one for each participant
- 4) Materials for service ritual
- 5) Copies of the definitions of three terms: “Sacred Time and Space”, “Habit” and “Ritual”, in print large enough for participants to read at a distance of several feet
- 6) Ten to 15 sheets of paper with various aspects of worship services from around the year, including both rituals (lighting the chalice, Water Communion, Flower Communion, baby dedications and other milestones) and non-ritual activities that take place at church (singing hymns together, talking at coffee hour, listening to the sermon or homily)

LEADER PREPARATION

- 1) Draw a line to divide one newsprint page in half. Label one half “Ritual” and the other half “Habit”.
- 2) Around the room, post the sheets of paper with the various elements of year-round worship services on them. (See NOTE under Part III of this session for a variation on this step)

DEFINITIONS FOR REFERENCE

HABIT: A usual way of behaving; an action which is repeated often and in a regular way (the same way each time)

RITUAL: An action which is repeated regularly, and the same way each time, AND which is specifically for a religious and/or sacred purpose

SACRED TIME AND SPACE: Time and space which is set aside from the everyday for a sacred and/or religious purpose

SESSION OUTLINE

- VIII. OPENING (10-15 minutes)
 - a. Welcome the participants
 - b. Chalice lighting by participant
 - c. Select a chalice lighter for next week

- d. Allow participants to check in, using your usual question or Rose-Bud-Thorn. In Rose-Bud-Thorn, participants share answers each of the three questions. The Rose is a joy, the Bud is something they are looking forward to or about to happen, and the Thorn is an issue or concern. Encourage everyone to take a turn, but ensure that participants are comfortable passing if they wish.
- IX. DEFINING TERMS (20 minutes)
- a. Give each participant eight to ten Post-Its and a pen. Ask them to write down two or three habits, good, bad or neutral, that they do without thinking. Examples might be always putting their backpack in a certain spot, always putting the right shoe on before the left, or always sitting in a certain chair or spot in the living room. Give them three or four minutes to write their answers on the Post-Its and at the end of the recording time, to come up to the posterboard and stick their ideas on the space under where you have written “Habit”.
 - b. Repeat with “Ritual”. If needed, provide guidance for this question by asking, “What are some of your family’s traditions around the holidays?” or “Do you say grace before meals?” or “What are some of the elements of the worship service that you always know are going to happen, and at certain points in the service?”
 - c. After participants have recorded their answers and stuck their Post-It notes on the newsprint for “Ritual”, have a leader or youth read the responses for each.
 - d. Ask the youth if they notice any key differences between “Habits” and “Rituals”. Does one tend to be more specialized to a certain area of life? (The hope is that the youth will come—on their own—to the conclusion that rituals have a specific connotation of a sacred or religious experience.) Give time for a few youth to share their thoughts.
 - i. Bring out the definitions of “Habit” and “Ritual” and share the definitions with the group. Use tape to attach each definition to its appropriate side of the newsprint for future reference.
 - 1. Finally, take out the “Sacred Time and Space” definition. Read it to the youth and then use tape to attach it to the bottom of the “Ritual” side of the newsprint. Use some of the ideas that the youth came up with for “Rituals” to frame the question—“Are these sacred times and spaces?” For example, is saying grace before meals a sacred time? What about the church where you hold the worship service? Some will be obvious, like church. But what about less-obvious spaces? Are the woods sacred, if you’re going on a hike and you consider hiking to be a “sacred” experience? (Note that this is not a question with a “correct” answer; the idea is to get the youth actively thinking about what spaces and times are sacred to them.)
- X. IDENTIFYING RITUALS IN WORSHIP (20-25 minutes)
- a. Give the youth another stack of Post-It notes, about ten, for this activity. They do not need pens, since they will not be writing.

- b. Tell them that around the room are posted sheets of paper with various aspects of worship services that they would encounter if they were to attend church every Sunday for an entire worship year. This is not an exhaustive list, but it should include a wide variety of elements from all around the liturgical year. Ask the youth to walk around the room, look at each element, and put a Post-It on the ones that they think count as rituals. Remind them of the definition of a ritual: “An action which is always performed in the same way and at the same time, AND which has a religious or sacred connotation.”
 - i. NOTE: IF there is time, you can further involve the youth in this activity by having them generate the list of elements to be posted around the room. This has the double benefit of giving them more ownership over the activity as well as “jogging their memories” of some of the special rituals that they’ve participated in themselves (their own milestones, going to Christmas Eve services with their families, the baby dedication of a younger sibling, etc.)
 - c. Give the youth five minutes or so to travel around the room and place their Post-It notes as they feel appropriate. When the five minutes is up, ring a bell or give another symbol to return to their seats. A youth or leader should gather up the sheets of paper and the group should then discuss the responses. Which items were listed as “rituals” and which were not? If there is any disagreement, give the youth a chance to discuss, especially if one element got only one or two “Post-It votes”, and see if the group can come to a consensus or near-consensus about that element. But it is not essential to have consensus before moving on; it’s much more important for the youth to begin actively thinking about the role of ritual in the worship service.
- XI. SONG—*Shalom Chaverim*
- XII. SUN SALUTATION (5 minutes for both Song and Sun Salutation)
- XIII. CLOSING QUESTION (5 minutes)
- a. Now that we’ve had three chalice lightings and three closing songs/rituals, how do you feel about them? How does it feel to know that Sunday mornings, while you’re here, are set aside from your everyday activities? Do you look forward to it? Feel neutral? How do you feel afterward?
- XIV. CHALICE EXTINGUISHING

Session 5.

When have you felt at one with the Universe? How can we get there in worship?

Session Goals:

Participants will

- Remember a personal experience of spiritual connection
- Consider ways to intentionally re-create that sense of connection
- Practice one method of connecting in a worship setting

Leader Preparation:

Write out the reflection questions from the **Connecting to the Ultimate** activity on newsprint, and have ready to display.

Today's **Ritual** activity is designed to promote an experience of intimacy and oneness among the group. If your group tends to be giggly, restless or otherwise uncomfortable, they may not be ready for deep sharing. If they tend to be verbal, try the **Ritual** activity, keep it light, and remind participants to be aware they will be sharing; if not, try the **Altar Building** activity.

If the group still needs to gain comfort with each other, add a team-building game such as those in the opening sessions to the beginning of each class, to help them increase comfort with this group. Sources include

<http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activities/cooperative-games.page-1.html> and <http://www.leadership-with-you.com/leadership-icebreakers.html>.

Materials List:

Chalice

Matches

Altar Cloth

Journaling paper

Pens, one per participant

Bowl of sea glass

Assortment of permanent markers

Music player and background music – kirtan chanting or rhythmic drumming would be a good choice

Chime

Flip chart

Markers

Activities:

Opening 15 minutes

Welcome the participants

Chalice lighting by participant

Select a chalice lighter for next week

Allow participants to check in, using your usual question or Rose-Bud-Thorn. In Rose-Bud-Thorn, participants share answers each of the three questions. The Rose is a joy, the Bud is something they are looking forward to or about to happen, and the Thorn is an issue or concern. Encourage everyone to take a turn, but ensure that participants are comfortable passing if they wish.

Connecting to the Ultimate 20 minutes

Share:

Today we'll be talking about how worship can help connect people with each other and the Holy. Sometimes this is called mysticism. Some people feel very connected when they are singing together with a group, calling out "Amen!" or celebrating in other obvious ways that can be seen and heard. Other people feel this sense of connection when they are silently meditating or praying. Finding language for this feeling of connection can be a challenge that music and poetry can help us overcome.

Rumi was an Islamic mystic and poet, who spent much of his life trying to feel and express his connection with the divine. Do you have a favorite poet? (Give time for some responses.)

A book of poems – or the lyrics of a favorite song – can be good resources for readings in worship.

Here is one of Rumi's poems:

WHERE EVERYTHING IS MUSIC

Don't worry about saving these songs!

And if one of our instruments breaks,

It doesn't matter.

We have fallen into the place

Where everything is music.

The strumming and the flute notes

Rise into the atmosphere,

And even if the whole world's harp

Should burn up, there will still be

Hidden instruments playing.

So the candle flickers and goes out.

We have a piece of flint, and a spark.

This singing art is sea foam.

The graceful movements come from a pearl

Somewhere on the ocean floor.

Poems reach up like spindrift and the edge
Of driftwood along the beach, wanting!

They derive
From a slow and powerful root
That we can't see.

Stop the words now.
Open the window in the center of your chest,
And let the spirits fly in and out.

-Tr. Coleman Barks 1995

Remind the group of the spectrum exercise from Session 1. Recall some of the most popular answers from the

Read the following to the group:

Matthew Fox describes two kinds of spiritual ecstasy – the natural and the tactical. We can all experience *natural* “highs,” or connections with the divine, through such experiences as singing, dancing, eating, seeing beauty in nature, exercise, and being with good friends. We can use *tactical* ecstasies – traditional, usually repetitive practices such as chanting, prayer, fasting, yoga – to reach the same kind of connection with the divine. But,

Fox says, only if we have experienced it naturally first. What do you think?
Do you agree?

Pass out paper and pens. Post the newsprint with the following questions.

Invite participants to spend a few minutes journaling on the following questions:

Have you ever had a personal experience of the divine?

Can you remember a time when you felt a sense of connection with the universe?

Where were you? What were you doing? What sensations did you feel or experience at that time?

How could worship help someone get back there, be reminded of that experience of one-ness?

Ritual

20 minutes

Invite participants to take a piece of sea glass from the bowl on the altar. Ask them to hold it while you read the following guided meditation, and then tell them that they will have a few minutes after the meditation to write a word or draw something that represents their experience of the meditation. You will be playing some background music during this time.

Read the following at a relaxed pace:

Find a comfortable position and settle into your seat. Close your eyes if you are comfortable. Take a deep breath in... and out. In... and out. In... and out.

Imagine yourself moving along a path in a forest. You pass under the trees and make your way to a river. At the edge of the river, you find a boat. You get into the boat. It floats down the river until the waters open out into a sea.

The boat keeps floating on, and you enjoy the waves around you as you travel. You have left the shore far behind, and now the only land you can see is an approaching island. The boat comes to ground on the island, and you get out and look around.

What is the island like? Notice how warm or cool it is, and what's growing around you. Is the breeze blowing? You walk towards the center of the island, and there you find a temple, a place of safety and comfort. What is your temple made of? Do you have to take a step up to go inside? Enter the temple now. Go through the entryway and all the way into the main room of the temple. Look around you and notice, what space has been made here for you to commune with the holy? Take your time in this space.

As you get comfortable, a creature comes to you. This creature is a messenger. Who has come to meet you here? They whisper in your ear. What do they share with you? Know that this message is one you can carry with you when you leave this place. Thank your creature, and prepare yourself to leave.

You head out of the temple now, and back into the boat that is waiting for you. It carries you back on the waters to the river. You float down the river and come to ground in the forest. Then you get out of the boat, and make your way back to the trees where you began.

When you are ready, you can return to this space and this time, and open your eyes. Look at the piece of sea glass you have chosen. Take three slow breaths in... and out. In... and out. In... and out. When you hear the chime, you can begin your writing or drawing on the glass.

Ring a chime to end the meditation. Play the background music and provide the permanent markers at this time. Ring the chime again to signal the end of the reflection time. Then, ask people to place their glass onto the altar, and share what they are comfortable sharing about what they experienced.

Alternative Activity:

Altar building

15 minutes

Offer a variety of objects to the group to use in creating a group altar. These might include: a set of cards with positive words or images, candles, cloths, small toys, garland, feathers, musical instruments, rocks, flowers, figurines, chalice, crystals, natural objects, bowls of water, etc.

Play some background music and allow participants to place objects in a pleasing arrangement.

Reflect on and appreciate their work. Did anything have special meaning? Did a theme evolve as the group created the altar? Is beauty important to creating sacred space?

Closing 15 minutes

A participant leads the closing as detailed in Session 1.

Hymn: Shalom Chaverim

Sun Salutation

Chalice extinguishing

SESSION SIX: MUSIC AND CHANT IN WORSHIP

OBJECTIVES:

***To gain an understanding of the role that music and chant play in various forms of worship**

***To articulate, at least rudimentarily, the role of music and chant in each participant's spirituality**

MATERIALS:

- **“Music in My Life” quiz, one copy per participant**
- **Clipboards or other hard surfaces to write on**
- **Pen or pencil for each participant**
- **“Music and Chant in Various World Religions” handout, one copy per participant**

LEADER PREPARATION:

- XV. OPENING (10-15 minutes)
- >Welcome the participants
 - Chalice lighting by participant
 - Select a chalice lighter for next week
 - Allow participants to check in, using your usual question or Rose-Bud-Thorn. In Rose-Bud-Thorn, participants share answers each of the three questions. The Rose is a joy, the Bud is something they are looking forward to or about to happen, and the Thorn is an issue or concern. Encourage everyone to take a turn, but ensure that participants are comfortable passing if they wish.
- XVI. EXPLORING HOW MUSIC AND CHANT IMPACT OUR LIVES (10-15 minutes)
- Give the youth the handout entitled “Music In My Life”. Have them read each item, think about how much they identify with that statement, and assign a number value to each one. Ask them to turn their papers over when they're done so the leaders can see when the group is ready to move on.
 - Give the group about 5-10 minutes to discuss everyone's responses.
 - ALTERNATIVE: If your group needs more movement, this activity also works very well as a “Values Voting” exercise. Have one adult stand on each end of the

room, one holding a sheet of paper with a “1” written on it and one holding a sheet of paper with a “5” written on it. Read each item and have the youth stand on an imaginary line depending on how much they agree or disagree with that statement. (“3”—the neutral position—can be in the middle of the room.)

XVII. MUSIC AND CHANT IN THE WORSHIP SERVICE—DIFFERENT VIEWS (5-10 minutes)

- a. Give the youth the handout of how different faiths around the world view the role of music and chant in worship.
 - i. Give them two to three minutes to read it over and digest it, particularly the range and variety of views on music—from faiths that view music as harmful or sinful to those that view it as integral and vital to the worship experience. Notice also that some faiths view music as a community/congregational event, while other denominations view it as a performer/spectator exercise where a cantor or soloist sings and the congregation is expected to sit quietly and listen.
 - ii. Elicit responses from them. Do any of these views surprise them? Any that they strongly agree with? Any that they disagree with or don’t understand/need clarification on? If a youth asks a question and no one knows that answer, that’s okay and even good. It’s a good opportunity to get a volunteer (ideally a youth) to commit to researching the answer and coming back the next session to inform the group.
 - iii. Tell the group about recent research that has shown that groups of people who sing together actually start to experience alignment in their breathing and brain waves (????? Need exact citations and more details on this.....)

XVIII. CHANTING EXPERIENCE (5-10 MINUTES)

- a. Choose one of the following activities*:
 - i. Teach a *niggun* to the group. Before teaching it, give the following explanation: *niggunim* are repetitive melodies, used in the Jewish community, with meaningless syllables instead of text. The group sings the *niggun* over and over again, and the aim is that eventually a sort of meditative state takes over when the whole group is singing together. A leader starts singing and everyone else just joins in when they feel like they have it. The leader, who starts the *niggun*, can add clapping, speed it up or slow it down, etc. There are different melodies for different occasions—funerals, weddings, b’nai mitzvot—as well as general melodies that can be used on any occasion.
 - ii. Have an adult—or a youth, if you have someone who is comfortable—lead a meditation exercise in which chanting and meditation are used together.

*For all of these, it's recommended to take advantage of the human resources you have in your congregation. If you have someone who comes from a Jewish background and is comfortable with leading *niggunim*, then invite that person in. Same with anyone who has done a lot of chanting and meditation. Just make sure to contact your desired guest well in advance so he or she can plan to be there on the day that you run this session! And remember that youth will often be shy to join in singing or chanting, so it's absolutely imperative for the success of this activity that the adults be comfortable with and join in the singing or chanting strongly. It's not necessary to be a "good" singer—in fact, the youth will feel more comfortable and more likely to join in if someone starts first who is not a trained singer—the intimidation factor will be lower that way!

iii. Elicit responses: How does it feel to sing or chant in community with your peers? Why do you think that is?

- XIX. SONG—Shalom Chaverim
- XX. SUN SALUTATION (5 minutes for both song and Sun Salutation)
- XXI. CHALICE EXTINGUISHING

MUSIC AND MY LIFE

On the line next to each statement, write a number to indicate how much you agree or disagree.

1=strongly agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, and 5=strongly disagree.

____ **I enjoy listening to music.**

____ **I enjoy playing music and/or singing, but not in front of others.**

____ **I enjoy performing music for others.**

____ **I like to listen to music while I study or do chores.**

____ **When I'm feeling sad or upset, there's a certain song or type of music that I listen to in order to feel better.**

____ **I have a favorite song or musical group. (If you want, write it in the space below:**

____ **I enjoy the music in worship services.**

____ **In worship, I prefer to sing, for example the hymns.**

____ **In worship, I prefer to listen to others, for example the prelude and postlude.**

____ **I think that music can help make worship more special or meaningful.**

HOW DO DIFFERENT RELIGIONS VIEW MUSIC?

Many CHRISTIAN denominations use music quite a bit in their services. Protestant churches will sing hymns, accompanied by a pianist or organist, and many evangelical Christian churches have “praise bands”, which are sort of like rock bands that play Christian music. Choral (choir) music has been written for the Catholic church for over a thousand years, and many Catholic churches have choirs that sing this music in addition to sung versions of the Mass (the Catholic worship service).

JEWISH congregations vary widely in their use of music, but traditionally there’s a cantor, or hazzan, who sings much of the service. This is partly because a lot of the Jewish liturgy is chanted rather than spoken. In addition, many contemporary Reform synagogues have a choir and arrangements of the popular prayers and songs that are meant for the congregation to join in. Judaism and Christianity both have a very wide range of practices when it comes to music in the worship service.

The BUDDHIST faith uses chanting as a way to get the mind and body prepared for meditation. Buddhist practices don’t really use “music” in

the sense of coordinated performance, for example a choir or a soloist who performs for everyone.

The HINDU faith uses music in a variety of ways. One very important way is through *bhajans*, which are devotional songs that speak of love for the gods and goddesses. Hindu practice also uses mantras, which are repeated, short sets of syllables that are chanted (sometimes with a melody, sometimes not) and are believed to have spiritual power to help the chanter to reach *moksha* (enlightenment). Music in Hindu spiritual practice is typically an individual exercise; for example, Hindu worship services don't have a choir with a director the way that many Christian churches or Jewish synagogues do.

The MUSLIM faith involves many different types of music, because Islam is present in so many different parts of the world. Some Muslims believe that instruments to accompany singing are forbidden, or *haram*, while others think that instruments are fine as long as they're accompanying religious music.

SESSION 9: ALTARS AND THE VISUAL IN WORSHIP

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- 1) Articulate how the visual sphere affects the worship experience
- 2) Explore how seeing different items sets up expectations for worship
- 3) Create a personal altar

ADVANCE PREPARATION:

Confirm that all the youth will bring a special item for their personal altar; have some extras on hand in case anyone forgets or is visiting for the first time that day.

MATERIALS:

A small table (optional) to serve as an altar

A collection of items for personal altars—small cloths, chalices, nature or decorative items, bowls or candles, etc.

A chalice and matches

A large stack of Post-It notes (enough for each participant to have 5-10)

Pencils or pens for each participants

Newsprint

Photos of different spaces set up for worship. Examples might include:

A New England-style church with pews

An informal worship setup with chairs in a circle and someone playing the guitar

A family sitting around the Shabbat table, with candlesticks, challah and wine

A nature-themed service, with people worshipping outside in the woods

A youth service (led by youth and attended by youth)

- I. OPENING (10-15 minutes)
 - a. Welcome the participants
 - b. Chalice lighting by participant
 - c. Select a chalice lighter for next week
 - d. Allow participants to check in, using your usual question or Rose-Bud-Thorn. In Rose-Bud-Thorn, participants share answers each of the three questions. The Rose is a joy, the Bud is something they are looking forward to or about to happen, and the Thorn is an issue or concern. Encourage everyone to take a turn, but ensure that participants are comfortable passing if they wish.

- II. WORSHIPPING WITH OUR EYES (15 MINUTES)
 - a. Post the different pictures of different worship set-ups around the room.
 - b. Have the participants walk around and look at each picture, then for each one, write one word that describes the image or impression that that picture evokes. This should be an individual, quiet activity. Make sure to tell the youth that responses need to be respectful, but should be honest. The idea is to get everyone thinking about the emotions and expectations that it would evoke to walk into a worship space and see a particular set-up.
 - c. When everyone has made the rounds of all the pictures, have them return to their seats. Collect the pictures off the walls and engage in a discussion of the different responses. Youth should feel free to explain why they labeled a certain picture in a certain way, but should not be obligated to do so. As always, questions and respectful disagreement are encouraged. The point is not to come to a consensus about anything, but just to get the

youth and adults talking about how the physical, visual space can set up the worship experience before it's even begun so that they can start to explore how they want their own worship space to be set up.

III. Unitarian Universalist Worship Spaces (10 minutes)

- a. Tell the youth that while every UU worship space will be slightly different, there are a few elements that you can pretty much always count on seeing. Ask the youth to name items that they think should be on this list. Record their suggestions on newsprint as they name them.
- b. When your list is complete, scan it and add any that you feel have been missed. This list will form the basis for the decisions that the group will use to design their worship in Session 12, but if you get to that session and find that there are items not on this list, you can always add them at that time.

IV. Designing a Personal Altar (15-20 minutes)

- a. Tell the youth that each worship space will usually have an altar of some kind (hopefully, this was one of the items on the list from Step III). This is a spot where the chalice is placed, often the candles or bowl of water for Joys and Sorrows, and often decorative items or items that have special meaning to the people at the service or related to the theme. Any special ritual worship items—for example, water for Water Communion—are usually placed on the altar as well. It's usually covered with some kind of special or decorative cloth to signify its importance in the worship space.
- b. Tell the youth that they will now have a chance to create their own personal altar. Place the collection of materials in the middle of the room that you've prepared—the cloths, chalices and decorative items. Also remind them that if they brought a special item that has significance for them or illustrates who they are in some way, they can add that item to their altar as well. Give the youth about 10 minutes to choose from among the materials and then create their personal altars. At the end of the 10 minutes, everyone will walk around the room and see what everyone else created. After that, give some time for anyone who wants to share or explain the choices they made to do so.
 - i. NOTE: Depending on how many youth you have and how many materials, you may have to pair the youth up to create personal altars. Use your best judgment to decide whether this should be an individual or pair activity. If getting enough materials is a concern, you can ask for donations or loans of materials from families in the weeks leading up to this session. Another option (especially for small groups) is to have the whole group work together to create a group altar.

QUESTION: What to do with the altars at the end of the session? Just take them down and have the youth take their personal items home? OR have each youth/pair keep one item aside that they would like to have incorporated into the altar used during the worship service in Session 12?

V. SONG—Shalom Chaverim

VI. SUN SALUTATION (5 minutes for both song and Sun Salutation)

VII. CHALICE EXTINGUISHING

SESSION 10: CREATING INTIMACY AND MAKING RISKS FEEL SAFE

OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- *Explore the ways that group size can affect the worship experience
- *Articulate worship activities that would be helped or hindered by larger or smaller group size
- *Use those insights to inform decisions about what worship activities to include in the worship service in Session 12

MATERIALS:

- *Newsprint divided into two columns: “Better for Larger Group” and “Better for Smaller Group”
- *The included list of worship activities (there will be time in the session to add more)
- *Audio/visual materials to show the following clips:

*****INSERT CLIPS OF 2-3 WORSHIP SERVICES OF VARYING SIZES*****

- I. OPENING (10-15 minutes)
 - a. Welcome the participants
 - b. Chalice lighting by participant
 - c. Select a chalice lighter for next week

Allow participants to check in, using your usual question or Rose-Bud-Thorn. In Rose-Bud-Thorn, participants share answers each of the three questions. The Rose is a joy, the Bud is something they are looking forward to or about to happen, and the Thorn is an issue or concern. Encourage everyone to take a turn, but ensure that participants are comfortable passing if they wish.

- II. EXPLORING HOW GROUP SIZE AFFECTS WORSHIP (15 MINUTES)
 - a. Ask the group to think for a moment about whether their favorite worship experiences—being in church with their families, or a youth service, or family worship around the kitchen table, for example—have tended to be in larger or smaller groups. Some people like to worship with a lot of other people, and others prefer smaller, more intimate group sizes. Both have their benefits and their challenges.
 - b. Show the group the clips of worship experiences with various group sizes. You only need to show a short portion of each—perhaps 30 seconds to one minute. The idea is to give the group a concrete picture of what worship would look like in a VERY large group as opposed to a very small group, in case any haven’t experienced it and therefore have no frame of reference.

- i. For each clip, engage the youth in a conversation about what they think the benefits or challenges might be for that style of worship. For example, the clip of the worship service at GA might seem very exciting—to be worshipping with so many other people. But how would it feel to do Joys and Sorrows in such a large group? Would you feel comfortable sharing a real concern or fear with several hundred strangers?
 - c. Take out the newsprint divided into two columns and the pile of index cards that you've labeled with various types of worship experiences. Ask the youth to look at each one and decide whether they think it would work better in a larger or smaller group and tape or pin them to the appropriate column. Items that would work equally well in either can go in between the two categories. Give the youth about 5 minutes to do this. (Part of this activity might need to be defining the parameters for “large group” vs. “small group”.)
 - i. After all the index cards are placed, have another discussion. For the items that were found to be more conducive to smaller groups, such as Joys and Sorrows, what can be done to encourage intimacy in a larger group or make it feel more safe so people feel comfortable sharing? Are there any activities that simply would not work with a very large or very small group? If so, what are they?

III. SHARING AND RISK-TAKING (15 MINUTES)

IV. PREPARING TO CREATE WORSHIP (10 MINUTES)

- a. Tell the youth that next week, they will be planning their own worship service. They will be able to decide what kind of service they want—do they want to plan and lead an adult service? A children's chapel for the younger kids? A youth service for themselves, with a “jigsaw” format? (A jigsaw format is where the youth break up into small groups, each with an adult to help them, and is responsible for planning one or two elements of the worship service with the help of a common set of materials. Typically, there is no sermon, but rather a story or experiential activity.)
 - i. Make sure that you only offer possibilities that you actually have the time and resources, as leaders, to facilitate. Planning and leading an adult worship service can be a huge undertaking; only offer that as a possibility if you think the group can do it successfully and the congregation (including the minister) would welcome it.
- b. Engage the youth in a discussion of the different types of services available to them. The group may quickly come to a decision, but if there's disagreement, ask them how a decision can be fairly and equitably made. (Be prepared with some suggestions that you feel are fair and productive in case no viable solutions come forward.) Many youth are drawn to the “jigsaw” format because it's fast-paced, fun and allows ample room for creativity. If the group comes to a decision within the ten minutes allotted for this activity, that's great, but if they don't it's all right

too. They will just need to know that a decision will need to be made before they can start planning their worship service in the next session.

- V. SONG—Shalom Chaverim
- VI. SUN SALUTATION (5 minutes for both song and Sun Salutation)
- VII. CHALICE EXTINGUISHING

SESSION 11: CREATING WORSHIP

OBJECTIVES:

Youth will:

- 1) Reflect on the different elements of worship that they have learned about
- 2) Decide on a worship format to use
- 3) Create and lead their own worship service

*****NOTE: This session may very well have to be split between two meetings, depending on the size and scope of the worship service being planned.*****

QUESTION—should an adult worship service be an option? Putting on an adult service is a HUGE undertaking; almost seems like it would need its own set of sessions if the group were to go that route.

MATERIALS:

The list from Session 9 of worship service elements

If using, the group altar or personal altar items from Session 9

If you've been keeping it, the box of Orders of Service that the group has collected over the last months

For a Jigsaw-style worship service:

- 1) Four to six heavy shopping bags, each with:
 - a. Two index cards, each with one non-consecutive element of the worship service written on it
 - b. A hymnal (*Singing the Living Tradition*)
 - c. A chime or bell
 - d. A soft, squishy ball
 - e. A large feather

- 2) A communal table with:
 - a. Candles and candleholders for Joys and Sorrows
 - b. A bowl of water and some marbles or stones
 - c. A CD player and a collection of various CDs of music that would be appropriate for a youth worship service
 - d. A collection of books of poetry, meditations or reflections that would be appropriate for a youth worship service
 - e. A chalice and matches

FOR A CHILDREN'S CHAPEL SERVICE:

- 1) The items listed under #2 above
- 2) A copy of the typical order of Children's Chapel services

*Note that if you plan to have the youth lead a Children's Chapel, you'll need to communicate with the DRE and/or RE committee chair to make sure they can plan accordingly and prepare the children for the fact that they'll have some special guests.

XXII. OPENING (10-15 minutes)

- a. Welcome the participants
- b. Chalice lighting by participant
- c. Select a chalice lighter for next week

Allow participants to check in, using your usual question or Rose-Bud-Thorn. In Rose-Bud-Thorn, participants share answers each of the three questions. The Rose is a joy, the Bud is something they are looking forward to or about to happen, and the Thorn is an issue or concern. Encourage everyone to take a turn, but ensure that participants are comfortable passing if they wish.

XXIII. PREPARING TO CREATE A WORSHIP SERVICE (10-15 minutes)

- a. If the youth did not do so during their last session, now is the time to decide which format to use: Jigsaw format; or a children's chapel. An adult service is a possibility, but if you're choosing this option you'll need to decide that at least a few months in advance so that the DRE can coordinate with the minister and worship team. This may necessitate leaving off of this session and coming back to planning the service closer to the available date, since it's unlikely that the group will be in a position to choose to put on an adult worship service at the beginning of the curriculum.
 - i. Use whatever method of coming to a group decision you have found to work best for your group.
- b. After the group has decided what type of worship service to create, briefly discuss who will be the target audience for this service. If it's a jigsaw service, the youth will be cooperating to lead their own service. If it's a children's chapel, they'll be leading the service for younger kids. If it's an adult service, the target audience will be their parents and other adults. It's important for the group to understand that the audience will partly determine what readings, songs, meditations, etc. the service is to include.

XXIV. CREATING WORSHIP

- a. Using the list you created in Session 9:
- b. This next step will depend on what type of service the group has chosen. If the group has chosen a jigsaw format, you will divide the youth into groups of three to four, ideally each with an adult, although if you don't have enough adults for this the advisors can float between groups. If the group is creating a Children's Chapel or youth service, the DRE will want to work with them to decide on songs, activities, stories, etc. If the group is putting together an adult service, the DRE and/or youth

advisors will need to coordinate with the worship team and minister.

- c. Give the group the rest of this session, and if needed an additional session, to plan its service with the assistance of the DRE and youth advisors. Decide when you will lead your worship service. If it is to be a Children's Chapel, make sure there is a plan for communicating with the elementary RE community about when and where this chapel will take place. If it is to be a youth worship, the group can just do its worship service at the time that seems the most appropriate.

XXV. PUTTING ON THE WORSHIP SERVICE

- a. At the appointed time, the youth will lead their worship service.
 - i. Over the week leading up to the service, you will want to make sure that everyone is clear on their role and responsibility. Communication with parents is key! If it is a children's chapel, they will want to arrive early enough to set up the space and get comfortable. You will also want to communicate with the DRE or another adult working with the elementary RE program to make sure the children are prepared for the fact that their Children's Chapel will be led by Junior Youth—this will be very exciting for them!

XXVI. Closing

- a. After the worship service is over, make sure the youth have a few minutes to debrief about how it was. There will be a more formal evaluation in Session 12, but there should be time for the youth to congratulate one another, share any immediate thoughts they may have, etc.

SESSION 12: EVALUATING AND CELEBRATING

Participants will:

- Remember successes from the course
- Enjoy a celebration
- Reflect on how celebration builds community

Leader Preparation

Reflect on the whole course and choose several highlights to lift up to your group, being sure to include both worship experiences and learning goals they achieved.

Choose a familiar chant for the reflection ritual, and set ribbons, etc. around the chalice so they are easily accessible to all.

Materials

Special snacks/treats and drinks, keeping group food sensitivities in mind

Plates, cups and napkins

Favorite music from the course

Chalice and matches

Weaving frame

Assortment of ribbons, twine, bark, lace and yarn for weaving

Opening 10 minutes

Welcome the participants

Chalice lighting by participant

Allow participants to check in, using your usual question or Rose-Bud-Thorn. In Rose-Bud-Thorn, participants share answers each of the three questions. The Rose is a joy, the Bud is something they are looking forward to or about to happen, and the Thorn is an issue or concern.

Encourage everyone to take a turn, but ensure that participants are comfortable passing if they wish.

Reflection Ritual 25 minutes

Introduce the ritual by sharing the idea that recognition and celebration of accomplishments, like the participants leading a worship, are an important part of the life of congregations because they build fellowship. They are part of the fuel that keeps people energized to continue, and help solidify good memories for participants to look back on and be proud of their hard work.

Before beginning, explain that each person will be choosing two pieces of ribbon, etc. to weave into a group creation. Then, help the group remember and sing once through a favorite chant you have chosen (or play a chant in the background for a few moments) to set a worshipful tone. End the chant, then invite them to sit quietly for a few minutes to reflect. Let the group know you will ring a chime to begin and end the reflective time. Ask them to think back over all the things they have done and learned during Worship Weaving. Each participant should choose one worship experience they enjoyed and one new thing they learned. They will be sharing their thoughts after the silence.

Ring a chime and allow 2-3 minutes for reflection, then ring it again to end the silence.

Begin the chant again and continue it during the next few minutes. Ask each person, in a quiet spirit of worship, to choose two ribbons, one for each memory. Once ribbons have been chosen, have participants and leaders share around the circle, first for their favorite experience. As each person finishes speaking, allow the next person to speak while participants weave their ribbons into the weaving frame to create a group wall hanging. Go around the circle a second time to share new learnings and weave those ribbons together. Once the hanging is done, hold it up for all to view and enjoy. Share the following to end the ritual.

Closing Words:

“All Rivers Run to the Sea”

It starts with a drop,

Then a trickle...

A burble, a rush of water, bubbling toward its destination;

And finally the wide, endless sea.

All rivers run to the sea.

Today you brought water

Poured it into a common bowl.

Though our experiences have differed,

These waters mingle, signifying our common humanity.

Today you came;

And shared in this sacred community.

May you depart this sacred space,

Hearts filled with hope for new beginnings;

Go forth, but return to this community,

Where rivers of tears may be shed,

Where dry souls are watered,

Where your joy bubbles,

Where your life cup overflows,

Where deep in your spirit you have found in this place a home.

All rivers run to the sea.

Celebration Remainder of time

Congratulations, you've completed Worship Weaving!

Put on favorite music from the course and invite participants to share the food and drinks!