

NEIGHBORS IN FAITH

A 3-Week Interfaith Curriculum for Sunday Schools
Using the Workshop Rotation Learning Model

Developed for the Congregational Church of Weston, UCC
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These materials are available for free download at
www.congwestonucc.net/Children_Youth.html. Scroll down to the bottom to the section on
Workshop Rotations and click on the title, Neighbors in Faith.

For more information on the workshop rotation model, visit www.rotation.org.

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WORKSHOP ROTATION: NEIGHBORS IN FAITH

Purpose of entire rotation: To introduce the two other Abrahamic faiths in a way that highlights Jesus' insistence that his followers reflect God's love for everyone.

Goals:

- Provide a positive and welcoming experience of the Jewish and Muslim people and their religious traditions.
- Create and act on the understanding that Jesus tells us to build positive relationships with people beyond our "group" however it is defined.
- Provide the children with an opportunity to make meaning out of their workshop rotation experiences and share them with the congregation.

Learning Outcomes for each workshop

Judaism

By the end of this rotation children will have

- Visited a Jewish home and heard about the Jewish rituals and traditions that inform Jewish identity.
- Been exposed to symbols that have meaning within that tradition
- Shared meaningful ties and relationships with Jewish friends and neighbors whom they might know.
- Had an opportunity to ask any questions they might have.

Details

The design of this workshop depends on interfaith connections of the Pastor. Children are invited into the homes of a Jewish family, can be a different family each Sunday. For us, the children were seated around a table and the host explained Jewish rituals and traditions that take place in the home, the locus of many traditions and rituals.

Islam

By the end of this rotation, children will have

- Been exposed to symbols and traditions that have meaning within Islam
- Shared meaningful ties and relationships with Muslim friends and neighbors whom they might know.
- Had an opportunity to ask any questions they might have.

Details

Again, interfaith connections will be essential for the effectiveness of this workshop. We were able to invite Farhana Mirza from the Islamic Center of Boston (Wayland) to come and introduce our children to important beliefs and customs of the Muslim faith. Later in the spring, the children and some adults were taken on a tour of the Islamic Center of Boston in Wayland. The first intention was to have this rotation take place at the Mosque but it was not possible to meld the schedules.

Christianity

By the end of this rotation, children will have

- Been exposed to the Biblical basis for and evidence of Jesus' inclusive love. (see below)
- Have learned that Jesus' teaching of love of neighbor is rooted in Torah and that the Golden Rule is found in all 3 traditions.
- Explored Jesus' teaching of inclusive love and care.

These are the main references in the Bible:

Hebrew Testament:

Love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18)

How good it is when brothers dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1)

Golden rule (found in all 3 traditions, and many others)

Christian Testament:

Love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:36-37)

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

Lesson Design

GATHER: scavenger hunt with representations of Jewish, Muslim and Christian artifacts, using 1 or 2 classrooms if space is needed. Each child finds 1 artifact. Once found, (s)he helps another child find one without finding it for them. Objects include (starred appropriate for Pathfinders):

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------|
| Matzah* | Prayer rug* | Bible* |
| Mezuzah | Koran (hide up high) | Cup |
| Menorah | Hijab | Fish |
| Yarmulke/Kippa | | Cross* |
| Scroll | | |
| Challah* | | |
| Dreidel* | | |
| Havdallah (candle) J | | |

Children in the K-2 group find the objects and put them on the rug. Leader explains what each item is. For other age groups, let the children say what it is and what it is important to Jews, Muslims or Christians. The Leader can help if needed.

ENGAGE: Explain that during this time together we will focus on the way Jesus wants us to love: inclusively. And that includes people outside our “comfort zone.” There are several ideas here and you might not have time for all of them.

Read Bible references which provide the context for Jesus’ inclusive love (listed above).

Read *Old Turtle and the Broken Truth*. Questions after the story: How does the Golden Rule, found in all 3 Abrahamic faiths, apply to this story? What was wrong with the world toward the middle of the story? Why was the world better after they had both pieces? Why do you think we chose this story for these three weeks of learning about Judaism, Islam and Christianity?

For younger children, formulate some wondering questions, such as: I wonder what the man felt when he picked up the piece that said "You are loved." I wonder why it was a young person who knew to find Old Turtle." They don't have to answer the questions, but a prayerful asking helps them to stay with the story in a personal way.

Read the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Lighthouse Keepers: you could read together the Parable of the Good Samaritan and have them act it out. This could perhaps be shared as part of Children’s Sunday.

Pathfinders: Use the Godly Play Parable of the Good Samaritan, including the “wondering” questions.

RESPOND: This activity replicates, using sugar cookies as the broken/restored shards from the Old Turtle story. Kids will cut heart-shaped cookies from sugar cookie dough, prepared in advance. They cut the cookies into 2 parts making a jagged line, then put them on the cookie sheet together so they bake with a seam. The baked cookies will be frozen for use on Children’s Sunday. If possible, “etch” into some of the cookies “you are loved” and “so are they”.

If you can arrange it, have the youngest children come later in the rotation and be the decorators of the already-baked cookies.

GOING FORTH: I wonder what the world would be like if the truth were not broken? Or: What is the world like when everyone gets along?

You might wish to weave the learning into a worship service where the children take a leadership role. We do this on Children's Sunday.

For Children's Sunday

You could have two enactments of the Good Samaritan Parable, one done by younger children that is more or less what happens in the parable itself, and one designed by the Explorers that comes up with a more contemporary setting.

Create an enactment/reading of Old Turtle and the Broken Truth.

Hold a processional parade with each child holding up a sign with a different name for God. (Islam has 99 names for God, for starters!)

Older kids could choose a symbol for something that is broken in the world, make it from model magic or other clay, cut it, and put it back together, like the cookies. This would be displayed. They could write what it is, and what the world would be like if it weren't broken.

Have a Love Feast (Moravian tradition) with the cookies.

Invite Jewish and Muslim friends who either came to lead a workshop or hosted the children in their homes to be guests at the Children's Sunday service.