



Soulful Home

Finding the Sacred in
Everyday Spaces



Story
January 2025

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Opening to Story

Thanks to Our Widening the Circle Team

We would like to thank [The Widening The Circle Team](#) for their insight and help with this packet. Their support and research run throughout this packet, from the stories to the activities. Their help putting inclusion and love at the center of our packets is, in turn a vital part of helping families also center love in their faithful everyday moments.

The Welcome Mat

Exploring the Practice of Story as a Family

I don't know about all of you, but I love stories!

When I look at my life and its important moments, especially the family moments, I see that they are filled with stories! How our family came to be stories. Birth stories. Bedtime stories. Stories that I have told to help teach a lesson. Stories my children have shared with me that I thought may never end. Stories I have told my husband of the funny things the kids did while he was out. Stories of proud parent moments I share with friends. And stories filled with worries of "Am I doing this parenting thing right?"

I know I'm not alone. As every parent and caregiver knows, our lives are filled with stories because, as people, we are made of stories. They are the threads that make up the fabric of our identity, our connections and our dreams.

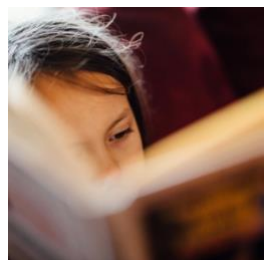
With this in mind, this month's Soulful Home Packet offers families a chance to connect with each other through sharing stories and to use stories as a way of conveying our hopes, joys, and challenges. Because this is how all of us human beings have made sense of our world since the beginning of time.

And yet, we also know that we all have different stories and a different experience with stories. Honoring this diversity will also be a part of this month's Soulful Home journey.

And so, my hope for this month is that your family gains a deeper appreciation for how you share a common story and for how each family member has their very unique stories. And may we as parents re-connect with what a gift it is to be witnesses to our children's unfolding stories.

Blessed Be!

April



At the Table

Exploring Repair Through Discussions

The At the Table section engages the theme through question-driven family discussions. The questions are designed to be used at a family gathering, most often dinner, but also during a quiet moment in the living room, before a board game night, or while driving in the car. This section strengthens the bonds within a family as members learn more about each other by asking and answering evocative questions.

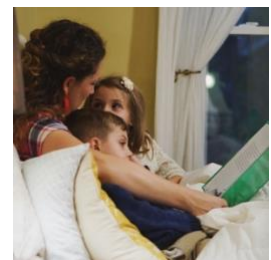
How To Go About It

The most straightforward way to do this is simply to have parents and/or caregivers read off the questions they think will resonate the most with family members and have everyone take turns answering.

Another fun way to do this is to create [a family question jar](#). To make this easier for you, we've listed all the questions below **at the end of this packet** with dotted lines you can cut along to make "question strips." You can then pull out the question jar and have family members choose a question/strip a few times each week.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the first story you remember hearing (a family story, a folk tale, a fairytale, etc.)?
2. What makes a story a *good* story?
3. What happens in your mind when you hear a story? Do you try to picture the characters and imagine the setting? Do you try to figure out how the story will end? Do you try to imagine yourself as one of the characters? Something else?
4. If your life was a storybook, what would that title be?
5. How would you describe the story of Unitarian Universalism? A hero story? Detective story? Love story?
6. Where do you think stories came from?
7. Who's usually the storyteller in your family? Who's most likely to add embellishments and exaggerations to make the story really memorable?
8. Whose story would you like to know more about?
9. Do you think it is possible to tell stories without words?
10. Has a story ever made you feel better when you've felt sad?
11. What is your favorite kind of story?
12. What is your favorite way to "hear" a story, read it yourself, have someone tell you a story, or watch it in a movie or show? Why?
13. Why do you think the people like stories so much? What do you like about stories?



At Play

Playing With Presence as a Family

At Play suggests games, crafts, and activities to help families experience the theme through joy and fun.

Option A: This Month's Treasure Hunt: The Story of Our Neighborhood

In this month's treasure hunt, we are going to search for and maybe tell the story of our neighborhoods. Begin by answering the questions below (on Appendix A at the end of the Packet) to help you hunt for the elements of your neighborhood story (characters, settings, plots, etc.)

- **Characters:** Who do I see? Who do I know? Whose life do I admire or wonder about?
- **Settings:** Where do we live? What are the places within the places? Maybe a sunny alleyway between two favorite stores or a patch of tall wildflowers along the fence line of a field?
- **Conflicts/Tensions:** What are the problems in my neighborhood? What do people disagree about? Where are needs going unmet? What changes do you wish hadn't happened?
- **Plot:** What happens in my neighborhood? What events do we experience together?
- **Theme:** What is my neighborhood about? What idea is big enough that it describes all of us? (Some ideas might be comfort, working hard, helping each other, beauty, playing, etc.)

Talk about the people, places, problems, events, and ideas you see in terms of story elements: "Look! There's Toby. I bet Mr. Green doesn't know he's out again. If our neighborhood were a story, Toby the Ever-Escaping Dog would be a fun character."

Share your stories with each other.

Option B: Game Night: It's Kind of a Fun Story Family Edition (ages 8+)

Gather the family (and friends) around the table and play a game where the story of your life earns you points (first to 7 points wins)! In this fun card game, everyone takes turns drawing cards and answering questions to tell a story from their life. But you have to be careful because if another player thinks they have a better tale, they may try and one-up you with a Hear Me Out Card and steal your points.

Purchase the game here: <https://www.amazon.com/Its-Kind-Fun-Story-Family/dp/B0D9381S61?gQT=1>

Option C: Puppet Basket

Puppet baskets are a simple way to build stories and play pretend. Maybe you have random puppets around the house (finger puppets or stuffed puppets), or you add an art element to this activity and make puppets with your kids using things like an old, clean (or dirty, no judgment) sock, a paper lunch bag, or a popsicle stick. Whatever puppets you have in your basket, you can set up a puppet stage (back of the couch) and make storytelling come to life.



Option D: ABCya's Storymaker

ABCya's Storymaker is a fun and easy way for kids to create their own stories. Young authors can write a simple narrative or a thrilling mystery.

<https://www.abcya.com/games/storymaker>

Option E: Paper Telephone Stories

<https://www.thegamegal.com/2011/06/18/paper-telephone/>

A funny variation of telephone, played on paper instead of aloud. It's a great game for creative teens or adults and can be pretty entertaining. It's always been a favorite among my family and friends. Best for groups of about 4 to 10.

What you need: Each player will need a piece of paper and a pencil or pen to write/draw with.

How to play: First, set up the game by sitting all your players in a circle. This game might be hard to play around a table because each player needs to keep their paper secret from their neighbors, so playing in a living room on couches and chairs works great.

Then, hand out paper and writing utensils to all the players. Have everyone write their name in small print at the bottom right of the page.

Everyone starts by writing a sentence at the top of their paper. It can be something random, true, abstract, from a song lyric, or about someone in the room.

Once everyone has a sentence at the top of their paper, everyone passes their paper to the player to their right.

Then, everyone illustrates the sentence given to them with a small picture right underneath the sentence.

Once everyone has finished drawing their sentences, everyone folds the top part of the paper over, so it covers the first sentence but not the picture. Then again, everyone passes their papers to the right.

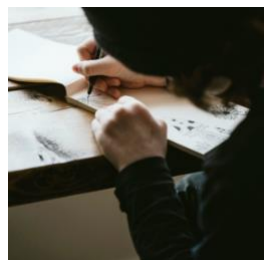
Now, everyone receives a paper with just a drawing visible, and everyone writes the sentence that presumably could have led to that picture (usually with some humor thrown in). For example, Bob, given the above picture, might write this sentence underneath: "Once there was a family of tree huggers." Then, everyone folds over their paper so only the last sentence is visible and passes the paper to the right.



That's basically how the game works. Everyone continues alternately writing sentences and drawing pictures, always covering up everything but the latest sentence or picture and passing to the right. Continue writing and drawing until you run out of room or until everyone gets their paper back (that's why you wrote names at the bottom at the beginning).

After everyone is done writing and drawing, everyone unfolds the paper they have and begins to read and laugh at all the sentences and drawings, especially how, in the world, the first sentence turned into the last one. Then, you can go around the circle one by one as everyone reads a paper out loud, or you can just pass them around so everyone can see the drawings clearly.

And then play another round!



At the Bedside and in the Book Nook

At The Bedside & In the Nook suggests books that help families engage the monthly themes with their imagination. This story-centered section honors the unique way stories enrich our sense of what's possible, expand our empathy, and build our identities.

The Story of a Book

by Joy McCullough (suggested for kids 8 and below)

Have fun exploring this gorgeous, joyful picture book that follows the lifespan of a book as it comes across different readers—and creates a kind of magic along the way and

Invitation to Connect: Parents, ask your children what the story of their favorite book might be.

The Light She Feels Inside

by Gwendolyn Wallace (suggested for kids 4 to 8)

Maya feels a warm glow when she picks strawberries in the community garden, hears music in her neighborhood, or spends time with the people she loves.

She feels a different kind of glow when she gets pushed down on the playground, overhears her family worrying about bills, and sees her favorite cousin stopped by police. Sometimes, that glowing seems like too much to carry.

But Maya is learning that others feel the same glowing light. Black women throughout history, like Ida B. Wells, Nina Simone, June Jordan, and Maya's own ancestors, found ways to honor these glowing feelings. Their light guided them to make a difference. The light Maya feels inside is an important part of her that she'll share as she works toward a brighter world.

Invitation to Connect: Parents, ask your children how the stories of their ancestors can empower them to better their own lives and stories, as well as the world.

The Best Story

by Eileen Spinelli (suggested for kids 5-7)

What makes a story the best? Well, the child in this book just has to know because the library is having a contest for the best story, and the winner gets a rollercoaster ride. But the only way to win is to find out what makes the best story. Brother says the best stories have lots of action. Dad thinks the best stories are the funniest. And her Aunt tells her that the best stories have to make people cry. A story that does all these things doesn't seem quite right, though, and the one thing the whole family can agree on is that the best story has to be your own.

Invitation to Connect: Parents use this as an opportunity to share the best story of your childhood with your children



In Front of the Screen

Watching Meaningful Movies Together

In Front of the Screen offers families ways to connect with the monthly theme and each other through movies and TV shows.

Option A

Bluey - Season 1 Episode 50 " Storytime" (G)

Bluey and Bingo want to hear a bedtime story, but instead of their parents telling them a story, they decide to create one themselves. Bandit encourages them to take turns telling the story and uses the opportunity to teach them how to build an engaging narrative. The girls take turns adding different elements to the story, building on each other's ideas, and creating an adventure together.

Invitation to Connect: After watching, try creating a story together like Bluey and Bingo.

Option B

Lilo & Stich (G, 5+)

A heartwarming story highlights the power of storytelling to create bonds, heal emotional wounds, and foster a sense of family and community. Watch as Lilo, a young girl living in Hawaii, adopts an alien creature named Stich. Together, they form an unlikely bond and learn to navigate the challenges of family life. Lilo's love for storytelling, her connection with her late parents, and her need to belong all come through in the film.

Invitation to Connect: Parents, here's your chance to share some funny (and challenging) stories about your family with your kids.

Option C

The Princess Bride (PG, 10+)

A beautiful movie about storytelling, adventure, and family bonds. A grandfather tells his sick granddaughter the tale of a young woman named Buttercup and her true love, Westley.

Invitation to Connect: Parents, use this movie as an opportunity to talk to your kids about the story of how their family came to be.

Option D

The Help (PG, 12+)

A powerful movie about sharing untold stories and speaking your truth. Set during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, a young white journalist, Skeeter, seeks to tell the stories of African American maids who work in white households in the South. The film emphasizes the power of storytelling in confronting injustice and creating social change.

Invitation to Connect: Parents, use this movie as an opportunity to talk to your kids about how they can help lift up some of the untold stories.



In the Toolbox

Strategies to Help Our Kids Navigate the Complicated Stuff

In the Toolbox offers parents resources to better understand the well-established and newly emerging challenges of being a child today. It's all about equipping parents to be better guides and companions for their kids.

Resource One

Helping Kids & Youth Navigate the Storyline about Social Media

Our society promotes the storyline that social media is fine for kids and teens. But that is being challenged more and more. Here are two articles that help parents and caregivers carve out and new story in which social media is less harmful.

- https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_ways_parents_can_help_kids_navigate_social_media
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/15/well/family/kids-social-media.html>

Resource Two

Reduce Your Child's Materialism

Unfortunately, one of the stories many of our children get told is that it is only with having the latest trend, fashion, or material item that allows them to be in the “in the in crowd.” But there are many reasons that families may not want or be able to keep up with these materialist trends. This article offers advice on how to help reduce your child's materialism and financial literacy.

<https://melbournechildpsychology.com.au/blog/6-ways-to-reduce-your-childs-materialism/>

Resource Three

Teaching Children about the Harmful Stories Called Gossip

Not all stories are good stories, and unfortunately, many kids will come across gossip at one point or another, whether it is about them or someone else. This article helps parents provide tools to their children about how to handle the harmful stories that come from gossip.

<https://theparentcue.org/teaching-my-child-about-gossip/>



On the Porch

Connecting and Sharing Stories with [Your Village](#)

On the Porch uses thoughtful questions to open space for you and your parenting partners or parent/caregiver friends to connect more deeply with each other and think more deeply about how the monthly theme has shown up in your life and can show up in a more intentional way.

How to Go About It

Bring these questions with you when the time comes to hang out with your co-parent or parenting/caregiver buddy. Treat the questions less as a quiz and more like doorways inviting you into the world of mutual storytelling and memory. Go through them all or pick a few that call to you most.

Questions

1. In your family of origin, what story was told about you? Were you the funny one? The talented one? The troublemaker? The quiet one? The rebel? The “good” one? Was that story one that supported your growth or hindered it?
2. What is the story about their childhood you hope your child(ren) carries with them through to adulthood?
3. What story or stories about your ancestors cause you the most pain? Which swell your heart with admiration and gratitude?
4. What childhood book/story shaped your character the most?
5. If you were to give the story of your childhood a genre, what would it be? And what moment pivoted your life from that genre to another?
6. Do you notice a unique or surprising “story” unfolding in your child?
7. When it comes to the story of your life right now, which best describes you: A [character](#) in it? The [author](#) of it? The [editor](#) of it? The bookseller/promoter?
8. What is one story you hope will be told at your funeral?
9. What story (or tale, or myth, or anecdote) gives you strength when times are hard?



Alongside the Chalice

Family spiritual practices and rituals are crucial for kids, youth, and adults. While lighting a chalice at home is a beautiful family practice, it can often be the only explicit UU identity practice we bring into our homes. So our Alongside the Chalice section offers a different UU practice, observance, or ritual for families to try out each month, with the hope that a few stick and become woven into the repeated and treasured rhythms of family life.

Family Blessing Ritual

This ritual is about honoring family members through storytelling, offering blessings, and affirming the bonds of love and support. It can be done at bedtime, on special occasions, or as a regular practice.

How to do it:

- Each family member shares a story about a moment when they felt loved or blessed by another member of the family.
- After each story, other family members can offer words of blessing or gratitude, such as: "I bless you with peace" or "I am grateful for your kindness."
- Optionally, end the ritual by having each family member share something they are grateful for that day or week.

Story Circles

A story circle is a practice where each family member shares a personal story or a meaningful story from their lives, their faith, or a favorite myth. This can be done during weekly gatherings or special occasions. It's a way to deepen relationships, pass down wisdom, and connect with the themes of UU principles.

How to do it:

- Choose a theme: e.g., "Stories of kindness," "The power of love," "Our connection to the earth," "Overcoming challenges," or "Acts of justice."
- Sit in a circle, light a candle as a symbol of the sacredness of the gathering, and invite each person to share a story related to the theme.
- Afterward, reflect together on the meaning of the stories. What values and lessons emerge? How can they guide you as a family?



The Extra Mile

The Extra Mile section is for families who want to continue exploring the theme of the month through larger adventures, more complex projects, or simply through additional modalities not otherwise included in the packets. A bit more effort, but well worth it!

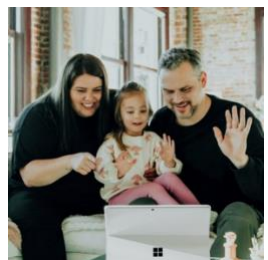
Zoom Your (or Their) Story

We hold on to each other by holding on to their stories. And yet, too often, we let those stories slip away.

Parents and grandparents long to remember their children and grandchildren when they were young. Likewise, children and grandchildren wish they captured more stories of their elders before they were gone. So why wait? And why not enlist Zoom to help? Zoom has become a way for us to connect across distance, but it also offers us a way to capture each other's stories. All we need to do is hop on, [hit record](#), and let the storytelling begin!

So, for this extra mile exercise, talk with your child/children and think together about someone whose story you want to hold tight. Invite them to join you on Zoom. Be sure to work with your kids) to come up with a few [rich questions](#). For instance, What was your favorite thing about childhood? What was the hardest? What has been the best day of your life? When did you first fall in love? What was war like? Who is your best friend, and why? What was your proudest moment? What was life like when you were my age? Do you remember when I was born? What was your first memory of me? What's your favorite joke? You likely already have a burning question to ask; use that!

Take this option seriously. We guarantee you will be grateful you did it. Years from now, you will be telling the story of how you took the time to capture the stories that mean so much!



Blessing of Story

Dear fellow page-turners,

“Please, just one more story!” granters,
and once upon a time inventors,

May you always bring your stories along.

May the tales of your ancestors bring you courage.

May the narratives of your imagination shape your future.

And by your listening, may your children come to know they are the authors
of how their stories unfold

May you be brave enough to share your truth,

Even when it feels vulnerable.

For in your story is the heartbeat of who you are,

And that is a gift of connection for all those who listen.

May you listen with an open heart,

To the stories your babies bring you.

All of them, even the ones you have heard time and time again.

May the stories you tell be filled with kindness,

And may they bring joy, healing, and understanding.

May they remind those that hear them that they are never alone.

And may you teach your young ones and not-so-young ones

that theirs is a story to be treasured,

that their voices are needed,

and that their tales are worth telling,

and more precious and powerful than they know.

Blessed be.

~ **April**



Question Jar Cut-Outs

Notice that there are a few blank strips at the bottom of the list.

We invite you to write your own questions on those strips.

We also remind you that questions that evoke stories are often the most impactful.

What is the first story you remember hearing (a family story, a folk tale, a fairytale, etc.)?

What makes a story a *good* story?

What happens in your mind when you hear a story?

Do you try to picture the characters and imagine the setting?

Do you try to figure out how the story will end?

Do you try to imagine yourself as one of the characters?

Something else?

If your life was a storybook, what would that title be?

How would you describe the story of Unitarian Universalism?

A hero story? Detective story? Love story? Something else?

Where do you think stories came from?

Who's usually the storyteller in your family? Who's most likely to add embellishments and exaggerations to make the story really memorable?

Whose story would you like to know more about?

Do you think it is possible to tell stories without words?

Has a story ever made you feel better when you've felt sad?

What is your favorite kind of story?

**What is your favorite way to "hear" a story, read it yourself, have someone tell you a story, or watch it in a movie or show?
Why?**

Why do you think the people like stories so much? What do you like about stories?

Appendix

This Month's Treasure Hunt

Characters	Settings	Conflicts/Tensions	Plots	Themes

Connect with More Inspiration for You and Your Family!

Parents can Join our Facebook and Instagram pages for
daily Inspiration on our themes:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/?ref=settings>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/soul_matters_circle/

Parents and youth will want to check out
our [Spotify](#) & [YouTube](#) music playlists on the monthly themes.

Credits

Soulful Home packets are prepared by
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Our Soul Matters Director of RE Resources and Family Ministry Coordinator

You are free to use any of this material verbatim in worship, newsletters
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