



Guest at Your Table 2025-26

Religious Education Activities

► Theme: Planting Seeds of Justice

The **Guest at Your Table** Program is one way the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee invites Unitarian Universalists everywhere to support the work of our grassroots partner organizations all over the world. While human rights and international aid are under attack, it's easy to feel like change is impossible. UUSC's partners, however, know first-hand that justice doesn't just appear overnight. The movement for collective liberation requires ongoing, diligent tending and long-haul commitment of a lot of people and communities doing what they can. Using the metaphor of planting seeds of justice, the purpose of these religious education activities is to help children and youth lean into this perspective so they can understand themselves and their communities as one small and important part of a spreading movement through time towards collective liberation of all people and our planet.



Story for All Ages

If your group has not heard the story for all ages that come with these materials in worship, we suggest starting by telling that story or showing the video or adapting a version of it for your group.

Activity and Discussion

How Did That Plant Come from That Seed?

Geared toward K-4th grade

Supplies needed:

- ▶ a bin of mixed seeds (or if that is not feasible, printed photos of the seeds)
- ▶ printed photos of the corresponding full-grown plants that come from the seeds in your bin, each printed on its own page

Activity and Discussion:

1. Allow the children to feel the seeds, to pick them up and inspect them. Ask some questions about what they notice about the seeds – size, shape, color, texture, smell, etc.?
2. Next, spread out the photos and ask the group to work together to match the seeds with the pictures of the full-grown plants. Depending on the size and nature of the group, you may want to break into smaller groups or ask the kids to take turns. Resist the urge to “give away” the right answer. Let them work it through together.
3. After they feel satisfied with their matches, ask the children what they notice about the seeds and the full-grown plant. Is it obvious which plants come from which seeds based on the size, shape, color, or texture of the seed? Ask - if you were from outer space coming to earth for the first time, would you be able to know by looking at a seed what plant would grow from it? At this point the goal is to be in an inquiry, stay curious with them.



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4. Now turn to the process of how the seed turns into a plant. Gather what the children know about that process by asking them questions like - what does a seed need to grow into a plant? You can either underscore the following points as they bring them up or add them if the group doesn't mention them.

- ▶ A seed can't grow on its own
- ▶ It needs to get put in the earth – something much larger and more complex than itself, full of other organisms
- ▶ It needs care in the form of water, warmth from the sun, and protection from things that would eat it
- ▶ It needs time to grow according to the patterns coded deep in its cells

5. Introduce the **Guest at Your Table** Theme "**Planting Seeds of Justice**" – Share your gratitude and appreciation for your group thinking together about seeds. Explain how like a plant, a seed of justice often grows into something that doesn't look much like the seed it came from, how they can't grow on their own but need care and protection from other people and the web of life, and how growing takes time. Explain that is why we sometimes talk about planting seeds when we talk about justice.

6. Give Three Examples – Choose ones from your own community or use some of these – When people plant a seed of justice, they don't usually know what kind of plant will come from it or how long it will take. For example:

- ▶ When Charles Tilden, a Unitarian in Oakland, California, raised the money to purchase some land in 1936 to preserve it as open space so that plants and animals could keep their homes and all people no matter how rich or poor could nourish their spirits in nature, he had no idea that in 2025 the East Bay Regional Park District would have 73 parks spanning across 126,809 acres, 1,330 miles of trails, and 55 miles of shoreline.
- ▶ When Olympia Brown became the first ordained woman Universalist minister and co-founded the New England Woman's Suffrage Association in 1868, she was determined to help change the laws so that women could vote. She didn't know that she would be among the few early suffragists



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who were still alive in 1919, when she cast her first vote. She also had no idea that more than a hundred years later more than half of Unitarian Universalist ministers would be women.

- ▶ When UUSC partner, The San Alonso Rodríguez Foundation (FSAR), began in 1999, they were seeking to help communities in Honduras recover from Hurricane Mitch. They didn't know at the time that they would eventually grow grassroots leaders and communities of trust that have shared their organizing tools throughout the region to protect local water and the land from the devastating effects of extractive mining from multinational corporations.
- ▶ When Victoria Sirois had the idea of creating Asylum Pride House in Philadelphia, she had no idea that faith groups like UUSC, Sisters of Saint Joseph, and some other Philadelphia-based faith communities would financially support her dream. Because of this support, her organization bought and renovated a large house, providing communal housing and innovative case management for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers. Many of their original asylum seekers have already successfully transitioned to living on their own in the community, which makes room for new guests in Asylum Pride House. They are now looking to expand and add more houses.

7. Explain that the money we put in our Guest at our Table Boxes and bring back to church on _____ day will be combined with money from Unitarian Universalist communities all over the world to nurture and tend the seeds of justice planted by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's grassroots partner organizations all over the world. Depending on how familiar your group is with the Guest at Your Table Boxes, [you might explain how the program works](#). Express gratitude for them participating and the power of Unitarian Universalists everywhere doing this at the same time.

8. **Optional:** As time allows and according to the developmental needs and capacities of your group, you might choose to show some of the [videos of the partner organizations](#) or tell their stories in more age-appropriate language. Please view the videos before you share them with your children, so you can choose the best ones for your group.



9. **Optional:** Invite the children in the group to imagine the seeds of justice they might want to plant or nurture along with the support of their families and communities. This could be a conversation or an art project depending on the needs of your group.

A Game

Spreading Seeds of Justice – Plant, Tend, Grow **Geared towards 3rd-6th grade**

With gratitude to the religious education program participants at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley who field tested this game.

Supplies needed:

- ▶ Slips of paper with these roles printed on them (one role per slip of paper).
 - Planter
 - Tender
 - Protector
 - Drought
 - Bird
 - Mouse
 - Insect
- ▶ A collection of small objects to represent seeds, like buttons or pennies
- ▶ Small bag or box for the planter to use to hold the seeds
- ▶ A scarf or other fabric pieces for the tender to place on the seeds
- ▶ A set of something to represent plants that have started to grow – empty yogurt containers turned upside down, blocks, potted houseplants, or the like
- ▶ Carpet squares, mats, blue tape, yarn, pieces of construction paper or any way to create at least a 5x5 grid of “spaces” as a game board for kid-sized players
- ▶ A grid on paper of the same proportions as your game grid



Rules of the Game:

- ▶ Introduce the theme of the day – “***Planting Seeds of Justice***” – and explain you’re going to explore the theme through playing a game about planting seeds.
- ▶ You can play a number of rounds of the game with differing proportions of roles, but for the first round, we suggest starting with one person in each role. Kids without a role can be observers.
- ▶ Have players spread out around the edges of the game board and then either have them draw roles randomly or assign roles. It can be helpful to have a more mature kid in the role of tender at least in the first round.
- ▶ Assign a tracker to use the grid on paper to keep track of how many turns the seeds stay alive for.
- ▶ Each round of the game is played in a series of turns. On each turn, one person, we’ll call them the director, calls out “move,” and all at once, each player can move one space and take one action, if there is one available for that player to take. At the end of the turn, the director pauses to make sure everyone is ready for the next move, and gives the tracker time to note on their grid on paper which seeds are still alive.
- ▶ Players can move one space adjacent to where they start the turn. Diagonal is okay. If two players want to go to the same space, they settle it with a round of rock, paper, scissors - unless the protector is involved (see below).
- ▶ A planter can move one space and take the action of planting one seed each turn. Each space can have only one seed.
- ▶ A tender can move one space each turn and take the action of placing a scarf over a seed if there is a seed on the space they land on.
- ▶ A protector can move one space (but doesn’t have to) each turn and if there is a seed on the space they land on, that seed is protected and no other players can land on that space. If a protector and a drought, bird, mouse, or insect land on the same space, the protector has priority, and the other player has to change course and land elsewhere.



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- ▶ A drought, bird, mouse, or insect can move one space (but doesn't have to) each turn. If they land on a space with a seed, they can take the action of picking up that seed, signifying it dies from drought or gets eaten. However, if the seed has a scarf over it from a tender, the drought, bird, mouse, or insect must remain on that space for a second turn before they can pick up the seed and the scarf. If a protector is able to move onto the space in that next turn, then the drought, bird, mouse, or insect has to move on without picking up the seed, and the space resets, i.e. if the protector moves on and a drought, bird, mouse, or insect moves back onto the space, the turn count starts over.
- ▶ If a planted seed survives through five moves, the director places the object representing a growing plant on that space. If the seed had been tended, the scarf remains over the young plant. A growing plant is safe from birds and mice, but still needs tending and protection from insects and drought. However, a plant that has been tended (has a scarf on it) takes a drought or insect remaining on that space for three turns before it can be removed from the game board. Protectors work the same way with plants as with seeds.
- ▶ The game proceeds for a while until the director calls the end to the round. It's helpful for the debrief if at least one plant gets established before you end the round. If time allows for subsequent rounds, the director can vary the number of players in each role as well as the length of play.
- ▶ Variation to consider - have the players play in silence with only the observers able to speak.



The Debrief:

Begin the debrief of the game by asking what players and observers noticed while playing the game. You might consider questions like:

- ▶ What made it challenging for the seeds to survive?
- ▶ What helped seeds survive longer?
- ▶ What did you notice when there were only a very few moves in the round? What did you notice when the round went on longer?
- ▶ Was the experience of the game different for players with different roles? How so?
- ▶ What were some of the moments in the game that were satisfying or brought joy?
- ▶ Was that different for different roles?

Be curious with the kids. Add your own questions about what they noticed.

Then, shift the conversation to planting seeds of justice. Introduce the theme of **Guest at Your Table** this year, "***Planting Seeds of Justice.***"

You might say something like, "the Guest at Your Table Program is one way the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee invites Unitarian Universalists everywhere to support the work of our grassroots partner organizations all over the world." If you have kids who are new to Guest at Your Table, explain how it works – that they "leave the box somewhere they see it every day and add some coins or dollars to it. Or in some families, they add a slip of paper with an amount of money on it that they might spend to invite one of the UUSC partners to dinner, and then they tally up the amount and write a check at the end of the month. Then everyone brings back their boxes to church on _____ day and the whole church combines their money into a donation to the UUSC who in turn passes it on to their partners on the frontlines of protecting and advancing human rights work all over the world."



UUSC's partners know first-hand that justice doesn't just appear overnight. The movement for collective liberation requires ongoing, diligent tending and long-haul commitment of a lot of people and communities doing what they can. We were just playing a game about seeds growing plants. But what if those seeds that we had planted were seeds of justice? What would a seed of justice need in order to grow? What kind of tending and protecting would it need?" Gather their ideas, and add some of your own as well. Some points you might want to underscore or include are these:

- ▶ Examples of tending and protecting could be giving money, volunteering time and energy to do things to help, spreading the word through talking with friends and neighbors or on social media, offering encouragement and support to movement leaders - emotional support as well as practical support like meals and childcare.
- ▶ Governments can sometimes be tenders and protectors of seeds of justice, and sometimes when people who are greedy or unfair are running governments, they can be harmful to seeds of justice.
- ▶ It helps when whole communities of people nurture seeds of justice together because people can take turns tending and protecting them.
- ▶ It takes time for seeds of justice to take root and grow, and it requires patience, hard work, and faith.
- ▶ Often the people who plant the seeds of justice don't know exactly how they will grow, and sometimes they keep growing even beyond the planters' lifetime.



Optional: As time allows and according to the developmental needs and capacities of your group, you might choose to show some of the [videos of the partner organizations](#) or tell their stories in more age-appropriate language. As a group you can talk about what were the threats to the seeds of justice and what and who tended and protected the seeds in these stories. Please view the videos before selecting the ones appropriate for your group.

Optional: Invite the children in the group to imagine the seeds of justice they might want to plant along with the support of their families and communities. This could be a conversation or an art project depending on the needs of your group.

Small Group Ministry Style Discussion for Youth Group

“They thought they could bury us, but they didn’t know we were seeds.”

– Mexican proverb

Geared toward 7th-12th grade

Make sure everyone in the group understands what the **Guest at Your Table** Program is and what UUSC is and how it works to support grassroots activists, movement leaders, and organizations around the world who are working to protect and advance human rights. (See above in Activities for younger age groups)

Open your group in its typical fashion.

Then read the reflection by Noemi Uribe in this year’s **Guest at Your Table** materials.

Ask if there are any clarifying questions about the content.

Lead a discussion in the style of your youth group with the following prompts or others fitting your group:

- ▶ Share a story of someone from your own life or those of your loved ones that would exemplify the Mexican proverb: “They thought they could bury us, but they didn’t know we were seeds.”



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- ▶ In the reflection, what does it mean to you that “we must also be the soil, tending to each other so that what is planted in struggle may bloom into justice, dignity, and liberation for all?”
- ▶ What are some ways you’ve seen or experienced such tending in your family, at school or church, or in your other communities?
- ▶ What is one thing you would like to do this week or this month to intentionally focus on being the soil and tending to yourself and others so that what is planted in struggle may bloom into justice, dignity, and liberation for all? Consider making agreements to circle back and see how it went in the agreed-on timeframe.

Close out your group following your usual pattern.