

# Signs of Our Faith: Being UU Every Day

## Session 9: Looking for Signs of Community

### OPENING

#### Materials for Activity

- Chalice, candle and lighter or LED battery-operated candle
- Centering table
- A chime or bell

#### Welcome all participants.

Gather everyone in a circle around the chalice table. Ring the centering chime.

Ask a volunteer to light the chalice, and recite together:

*We gather together as Unitarian Universalists and members of the Signs of Our Faith community.*

*Together we join in a community where we may bring our whole, divine self. Together, we nurture and support this community so it can be a home for us and for others.*

**Remind participants** that in other meetings they have learned about signs of our faith an individual might show by the choices they make and by how they interact with other people. Say that now the group will begin to look for signs of faith that communities of people can show-starting today with the community that is the congregation.

### STORY ~ The Journey of the Birds

**Optional Coloring Page:** Hoopoe coloring page by Jan Brett (page 4 below), and crayons

*Inspired by the ancient epic poem, "The Conference of the Birds," by the Persian Sufi Muslim writer Fariduddin Attar.*

Once upon a time, all the birds in the land decided they needed a leader for their community. A leader, they thought, would make their community stronger. Representatives of all the bird species gathered to discuss finding a leader.

"A leader will tell us the right things to do," said the robin.

"Our leader must be wise," said the owl.

"A leader must believe we each are important, big and small," said the sparrow.

"I want the leader to be caring, like a friend," said the dove.

"Yes, the leader help us share and get along better," said the jay.

"The leader must make us feel safe," said the hawk.

"I know where you can find such a leader," said the hoopoe bird. "It is the Simorgh and it lives far from here."

The birds were very excited. They said they were willing to go anywhere to find such a leader. "It might be dangerous," said the hoopoe. A few birds looked troubled, but all the birds voted to go find the Simorgh.

The hoopoe took off and all the birds followed.

They flew at night. They flew in sunshine. Days and days passed. Some birds got

tired and left the group. Other birds were filled with doubt. How did they know the Simorgh really existed? Only the hoopoe had ever heard of this bird. Some of the doubters dropped out, but others kept flying.

One valley was filled with fiery mountains. All the birds were afraid.

"I'm too small to make it over that mountain," lamented the sparrow.

"No, keep flying. We can make it together. We will help you." And they did.

The strong flyers helped the weaker flyers. The birds with good vision helped find food for the group. Along the journey, the birds learned how to better respect, share and care for each other. It seemed that every bird had something special and unique to offer that made the journey easier.

Finally, the hoopoe announced, "We are here!"

The other birds look around in anticipation. "Where is the Simorgh? We don't see it!" they cried.

"Come. It is over here," said the hoopoe.

The birds stood beside hoopoe and realized they were on the edge of a lake. They looked in... and saw their own reflections. Then, they understood.

The Simorgh was not another bird. The Simorgh was all of them, and all of them were the Simorgh. They remembered that each of them had something good and strong and special inside of them and that each bird had gifts to bring to the community. They were all that was needed to keep the community strong. They knew now that together they could do anything.

### **Questions:**

- The birds took a journey to find a leader for their community, the Simorgh. What did they find at the end?
- Along the journey, the birds supported each other. They grew closer as a community. In the end, they discovered that their community was strong. What are some of the communities to which you belong? Which ones are most important to you? Which ones feel strong? Why?

## **ACTIVITY ~ Bird Art**

### **Materials for Activity**

- Materials and supplies for art project and (optional) display

### **Preparation for Activity**

- Decide on a project. Plan for the children to collaborate on a display, such as a mural, a mobile of paper birds, or a bulletin board or display case filled with bird masks, or to make individual projects to take home.
- Select one or more artistic media for the children to use. If you will have time, consider paper mache, which must dry before it can be painted, or origami, for which you will need instructions and enough time for children to master the technique so they will be pleased with their creations.
- Identify a place to display the children's work. Obtain any permissions, assistance, and supplies you will need.
- Consider inviting a guest artist to this session.
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### **Description of Activity**

Children recreate the story "Journey of the Birds" using an artistic medium.

Introduce the project. Explain what the children will do and where their art work will be displayed (or that they

may take it home).

Encourage the children to choose a specific bird from the story to represent. Guide them to give their birds the qualities they demonstrated in the story: "How can you show that your owl is smart? That your hoopoe is a hopeful?" Point out that all of the children are making birds, yet each bird is unique.

If you have time after children complete their art work, invite them to retell the story using the items they created.

## **ACTIVITY ~ We Are the Ones**

### **Materials for Activity**

- **Song:** "We Are the Ones (We've Been Waiting For)" by Sweet Honey in the Rock
  - YouTube link (static pic): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHsJHZpOJCc>
  - YouTube link (slide show): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMqZIUuCykQ>
- Optional: Scarves

### **Description of Activity**

Children relate to the story "The Journey of the Birds," through dance.

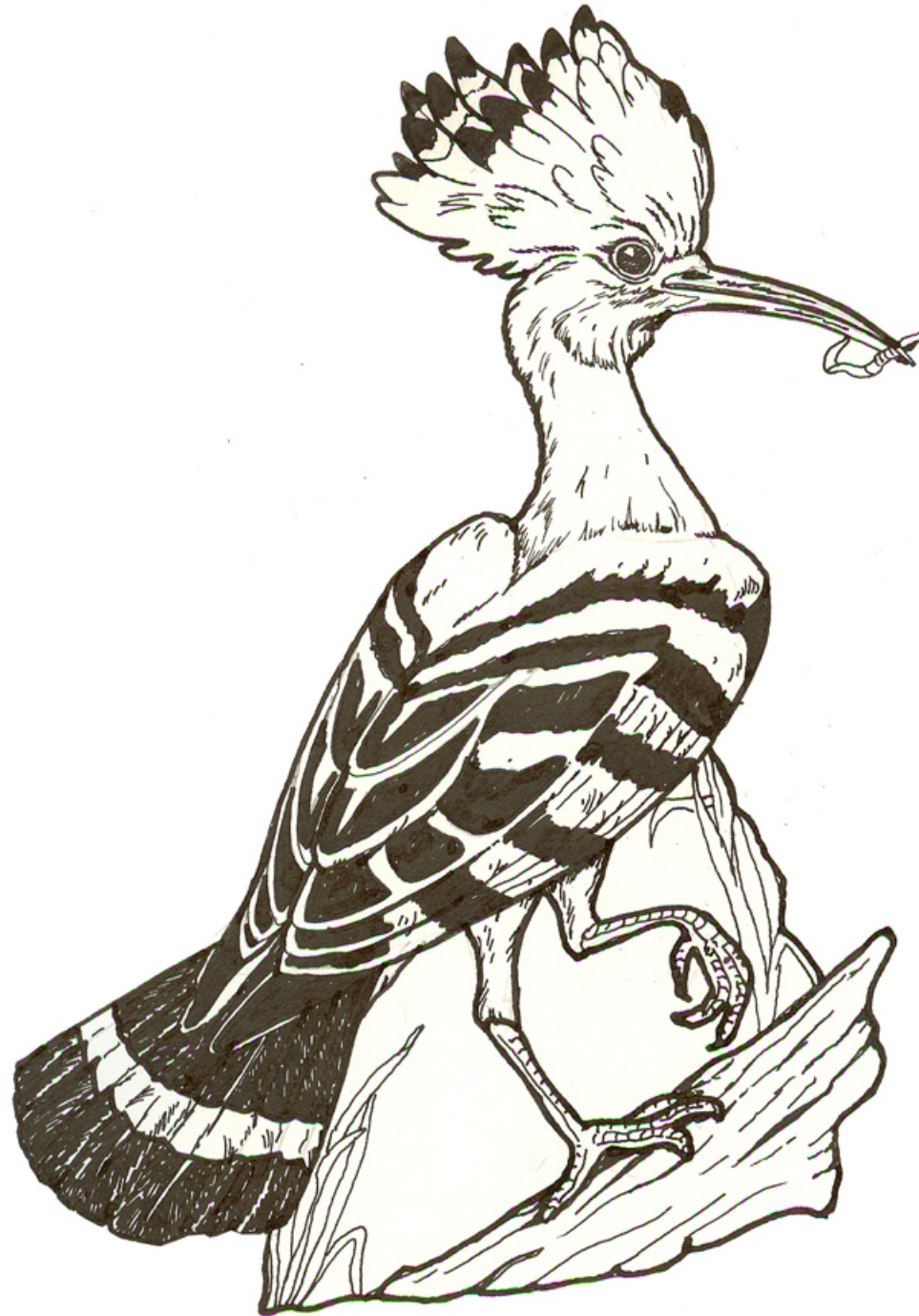
After children have heard the story, say, in these words, or your own:

*The birds realized they had all the qualities they needed to build a strong community. Because of all their different, individual gifts and their willingness to help one another, they were enough-they did not need a leader from outside their community. A song "We Are the Ones" expresses this sentiment.*

Invite children to move to the music, by:

- Dancing free form
- Dancing with scarves
- Pantomiming the story

Encourage them to dance their own, individual gifts and how they can share their gifts to help others in the group.



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