Acceptance/Tolerance/Respect

Chalice Lightings and Meditations:

We light this candle to remind ourselves to treat all people kindly, because they are our brothers and sisters.

   -- Anonymous

You need not think alike to love alike.
   -- Francis David

May we see the light that shines in all.
   -- Gary Kowalski

May the light of this chalice remind us to be here now, in the present moment - to know that this moment is enough just as it is, that we are enough, just as we are, and that the Eternal spirit sustains us no matter how often our own spirits may flicker or falter.
   -- Rev. Maj-Britt Johnson

Explore the following readings in Singing the Living Tradition published by the Unitarian Universalist Association. (Our hymnal)

# 437 by Kenneth L. Patton
# 439 by Sophia Lyon Fahs
#444 by Kenneth L. Patton
#459 by William F. Schulz
#475, Charter of the United Nations
#477 by Vivian Pomeroy
#596, Metta Sutta

#597, Dhammapada
#598, Buddhist
#601 by Mo-Tse
#662 by A. Powell Davies
#666 by Thandeka
#705 by Hosea Ballou

Read A Prayer for Serenity by Rev. Meg Riley:
http://www.questformeaning.org/reflecting/post/a-prayer-for-serenity
Story:

The Edict of Religious Toleration

Over four hundred years ago Princess Isabella of Poland was married to King John of Hungary. They had a son, whom they named John Sigismund after his father, John, and his grandfather, Sigismund. Little John Sigismund’s father was away fighting when he was born, and became sick and died just two weeks after the baby was born. He never saw his son.

The nobles of Hungary elected the little baby John Sigismund as their new king. But he was too young to rule a country! Other kings fought over the lands that had been ruled by his father and they were divided. The baby king and his mother, Queen Isabella, continued to rule the land known as Transylvania.

John Sigismund grew and studied. The wars did not stop. People continued to fight and argue. One of the things they argued about was religion. The people in Transylvania followed many different religions – Catholic, Lutheran, Greek Orthodox, Calvinist, and more. In 1557 Queen Isabella issued a decree of religious toleration. It stated that “each person maintain whatever religious faith he wishes…just so long, however, as they bring no harm to bear on anyone at all.” She also established a national gathering where there could be a real discussion and comparison of religious beliefs.

Queen Isabella died two years later when John Sigismund was just nineteen years old. Disagreements, even arguments over religious beliefs continued during King John Sigismund’s reign. Once again a gathering was called in the city of Torda so that men could share their views and convince each other of which belief was correct.

In 1568 King John issues the second Edict of Torda also known as the Edit of Religious Toleration. This edict reaffirmed the tolerance established in the first edict, and stated that “preachers shall preach and explain the gospel each according to his own understanding of it” and that a congregation could keep a preacher whose teachings they approved of. It also said that neither preachers nor anyone else should be threatened or imprisoned because of their beliefs.

One of the most powerful speakers at the gathering in Torda was the court preacher Francis David. David preached the unitarian understanding of the relationship of God and Jesus. King John Sigismund was convinced by his words and converted in 1569. In 1571, Unitarianism became an official religion in Transylvanian where it still exists today.

A picture of the great preacher Francis David hangs on the back wall of our meeting house to remind us of the roots of our Unitarian faith, and the history of Toleration that is our heritage.
Story Questions:

- What is the most important part of the story to you, and why?
- How does a conversation or discussion about religion differ from an argument?
- The Edict of Religious Tolerance was a unique political concept at the time it was written. In those days it was expected that whatever faith was followed by the King or ruler of a country would be the only accepted religion of the country. Believers of any other faith could be exiled, imprisoned, or even put to death. How is this different than this country and other parts of the world we live in today?

Possible Activities:

- We all like different things. When we live together in a family we need to find ways to live in harmony. Think about the different foods you like; different TV shows or movies you enjoy; and the different ways you like to do things. Do you have explicit agreements about what you will do when these different likes come into conflict? Sometimes we develop ways of living with these differences without actually making a decision to do so. Can you think of some of those?
- Explore the newspaper, magazines, and other media for examples that show tolerance, acceptance, and respect. Look for examples where this is not seen and talk about ways that the issue could be addressed in a more respectful and accepting way.
- Spend a day being intentionally respectful and accepting in your interactions with others. At the end of the day think back over the interactions and note whether you acted any differently than you usually do. Did people respond to you differently? Do you feel any different?
- Think about an experience you had recently with another human being that felt uncomfortable and that does not yet feel resolved. Maybe it happened with someone you don't particularly like or relate to, or maybe it was a family member, or a stranger on the road, or in a store. Take a moment to bring that experience to mind. Now take a minute of silent meditation to sit with that experience. Focus on yourself now, not the other person. What were you feeling and thinking? What does this experience teach you about acceptance, tolerance and respect – of others and of yourself?
**Resources:**

**Books for Children:**

The Doll Lady, by H. Elizabeth Collins-Varni, Illumination Arts Publishing Company, 2001


There's a Skunk in My Bunk: Helping Children Learn Tolerance, by Joseph T McCann, New Horizon, December 2002

Whoever You Are, by Mem Fox, Sandpiper, 2006


We Are All Alike... We Are All Different / Todos somos iguales... Todos somos diferentes [Handmade Bilingual, Dual-Language, English AND Spanish Book], by Cheltenham Elementary School Kindergartners, Scholastic, Inc. & Diversity Arts, 1991

**Resources for Parents:**

Raising Respectful Kids in a Rude World: Teaching Your Children the Power of Mutual Respect and Consideration, by Gary D McKay, Joyce L McKay, Daniel Eckstein, and Steven Maybell, Prima Lifestyles, 2001

Drawing Together to Accept and Respect Differences, by Marge Eaton Heegaard, Fairview Press, 2003

Teaching Tolerance: Raising Empathetic, Open-minded Children, by Sara Bullard, Main Street Books, 1997

“Let’s talk About Respect” a guide for families by Nancy Palmer-Jones and Pat Hoertdoerfer


http://www.tolerance.org/ This is the web site for Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. It is specifically designed for teachers of preschool through high school students. There are wonderful resources here for parents and others who care about teaching our children to live peacefully with respect and tolerance in our world.
Resources for Adults:


“Radical hospitality: how kitchen-table lessons in welcome and respect helped sustain the black freedom movement,” Sojourners Magazine, July/ August 2003

Respect in a World of Inequality, Richard Sennett, W. W. Norton & Company, 2004

Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life With the Heart of a Buddha, Tara Brach, Bantam, 2004


“Who’s afraid of freedom and tolerance? Why are fundamentalists so frightened by liberal family values?: A look at competing worldviews” by Doug Muder, UUWORLD.org, fall 2005 http://www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/1716.shtml