



Lewis Latimer
WE HELP MAKE THE WORLD BETTER FOR
EVERYONE



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ALPHABET
Please read the Introduction before using this Plan.

L Letter L introduces Lewis Latimer, inventor, humanist, and founder of a Unitarian Church, and lights and language.

MATERIALS: Construction paper with hole punched in top, yarn for necklace
Snacks—Lemon, lemonade, licorice

GETTING STARTED:

Welcome. After each person says his or her name, the group responds, “Welcome, (name).” For a child who is attending for the first time this year, add name to the letters that have been posted, to the attendance sheet, and make a nametag during or after the session. Leave an empty chair for someone who is not present or for someone who has not joined the group yet.

The Letter of the Day:

- Talk about the Letter.
- Give the Letter necklace to a person with that initial.
- Talk about the things that the children have brought for the Letter, and/or Letter grab bag.

SPECIAL PERSON: Lewis Howard Latimer, (Sept. 4, 1848-Dec. 11, 1928). His parents had been slaves. He was born in Chelsea, near Boston. He was largely self-educated and became an inventor. He was the only African American member of a group that worked with Thomas Edison, the inventor who was responsible for developing light bulbs.

Have you ever ridden on a train? When you travel for many hours, you sometimes need to go to the bathroom. Lewis Latimer invented a toilet system for railroad cars, called a "water closet" because of the small space, in 1873.

Have you been hot in the summer? Have you ever been in an air-conditioned room? Lewis Latimer developed a machine that became an air conditioner in 1886.

Have you ever turned on a light in a room? Lewis Latimer developed a filament that allowed the light bulb to last longer, and kept improving on the design and material. He supervised putting electric lights throughout New York, Philadelphia, Montreal, and London over a hundred years ago.

Have you ever used a telephone? Lewis Latimer was an assistant to Alexander Graham Bell, when he invented the telephone. Bell was a Universalist.

Lewis Latimer bought a house in Flushing, Queens, in New York City. He was one of the people who founded (started) the Flushing Unitarian Church, and was a volunteer at the Henry Street Settlement, where he taught mechanical drawing to immigrants, or people who have come from another country, who did not have money for school. He was also a poet and an artist. In 1968, forty years after he died, a public school in Brooklyn was named for him.

AFFIRMATION: *We help others.*

Light: Talk about light and dark. How much light is needed? Turn out the lights and make the room fairly dark, but not completely dark, if this is the first time that the group has talked about darkness. Gradually add lights, small at first, increasing in intensity with different sizes of flashlights. Allow time for the eyes to adjust before adding more light, and ask them what they can see each time. Talk about lights for safety, such as on stairs.

THE LETTER **L** IN THE CHURCH

How are lights used in church? Are there lighted signs in the building, such as Exit signs. Talk about turning off the lights when everyone is leaving an area. Where does light come into the church building, such as through windows? Talk about special windows in the church, such as stained glass windows, memorial windows.

To get "theological" about this theme, the song "This Little Light of Mine" focuses on the idea of the light being our lives. Like the light, each person makes a difference. (# 118, *Singing the Living Tradition*)

A-B-C

Animals: Lion, llama, and lizard

Body (add to Body Picture): legs

Calendar:

- Note the date of the session and any special events for the day, including birthdays.
- Note items beginning with that letter
- Note events between today and the next session.

CLOSING: Gather around the Special Place where the things related to the letter have been placed. "We give thanks for Letter L. We have shared and learned about special people and animals and ourselves and our church. May we leave in love and peace. Next week we will meet again. Our letter will be ____ and our leader(s) will be _____." Make sure that people take home things that need to go.

VARIATION FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Language: We speak English in schools, at work, in church. Does everyone speak English? What other languages are spoken in the church? In the community? (For some communities, English will be the predominant or only language; in others, other languages will be used.) Lewis Latimer learned languages so that he could help people who had come from other countries. He helped them learn English, so that they could be understood here. If the only language you know is English, how hard do you think that it would be to learn another language?

Have children's books in different languages for the children to see. Books and pamphlets in different languages are available from the Unitarian Universalist Bookstore.