



Reverend John Murray



The brig "Hand in Hand" aground on a sandbar off Cranberry Inlet

John Murray

CHURCH IS A PLACE WHERE WE LEARN
TOGETHER



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

M m Letter M introduces the historic Universalist, John Murray, the person of the minister, and ministry as something that everyone can do.

MATERIALS: Construction paper with hole punched in top, yarn for necklace
Snacks—Milk, muffins, marshmallows

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. Make sure that there is an empty seat for someone who is not present or 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 Bag.
- Put the things related to the letter in the Special Place.

SPECIAL PERSON: John Murray (1741-1815)
[Note: This story may be told as a total story, or with four parts to tell this story in an interactive manner. Suggestion: Break the total group into four groups, and assign the parts as the story unfolds. OR have adults or older children do the reader and Mr. Potter and Mr. Murray, and divide the younger children between “Yes” and “No.” Directions are given. It might be helpful to have four signs made –samples at the end of the session plan.]

This is a story about two men. One is Mr. Thomas Potter. Mr. Potter lived in Good Luck, on the New Jersey coast. He had a farm with a house and a barn and a church. (Who ever heard of having a farm with a church!) He knew, really knew, that

someday a minister would come who believed like he did. He waited and waited and waited –for 5 years.

The second man is John Murray. He is on his way from England to New York. He had been an Universalist minister in England, but did not want to be a minister any more. When the boat that he was on got near to the shore, it got stuck. It was the kind of boat that needed wind to move, so that even when the water was high enough to sail, there had to be wind. While the boat was stuck, the captain of the boat gave Mr. Murray money to go on shore to get food to take back to the boat.

Now Mr. Murray came to Mr. Potter’s house, knocked on the door, and asked for food. The men got talking, late into the night. As they were talking, Mr. Potter learned that Mr. Murray was a minister. Was this the minister for his church? Mr. Potter liked Mr. Murray’s ideas about God’s love for everyone, not just the people who belonged to a certain church.

Mr. Potter said:

“You will preach in my church!”

But Mr. Murray said:

“I will NOT preach in your church!”

And Mr. Potter was so sure that Mr. Murray would preach that he told all of his friends and neighbors to come to the church on Sunday. Because Mr. Potter said:

“You will preach in my church!”

But Mr. Murray said:

“I will NOT preach in your church!”

This went on for awhile. Finally, Mr. Murray agreed to preach IF the winds did not change and the boat could not leave by Sunday.

Will the winds change?
(Group One) "YES!"

(Group Two) "NO!"

But Mr. Potter invited even more people to come to hear Mr. Murray. He cleaned that little church so well that it sparkled. Mr. Potter kept saying:

"You will preach in my church."

And Mr. Murray kept saying:

"I will NOT preach in your church.

Will the winds change?

(Group One) "YES!"

(Group Two) "NO!"

Well, Sunday morning came, and the winds had not changed, and the boat was still there. Mr. Potter greeted Mr. Murray when he came to the church, and Mr. Potter said

"You will preach in my church."

And Mr. Murray agreed, "I will preach in your church."

That is how Universalism came to America in 1770. Ten years later, the first Universalist Church in America opened in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

In 1891 Murray Grove, a Unitarian Universalist conference center, started. It is right next to the land where Mr. Potter had build his chapel.

AFFIRMATION: *Church is a place where we learn together.*

Mr. Murray was a minister. Mr. Potter wanted his to preach – but preaching or leading a worship service is only one thing that a minister does. The service is the place where we are the most likely to *see* the minister, but what else does the minister in a church do? Suggestions:

- Leads special services, like dedication of children, weddings, funerals/memorial services;
- Helps the church run smoothly by working *with* church leaders and committees;
- Visits the sick and talks with people about the struggles of life;

- May have a time for children in the church service.

Suggested activities:

1. Have a minister visit the group or do something special in the church service. The focus is on developing a relationship between the minister and the children. In churches in which there are more than one minister, mention the various roles and commonalities.
2. Make special cards of appreciation for the minister(s) from construction paper and pictures/drawings.
3. Make a collage of pictures of the various roles of a minister.
4. If there are pictures of previous ministers, take time to look at them as a way of showing tradition. Are they all men? Have there been women in the past or present?

THE LETTER **M** IN THE CHURCH

Money. Money can be mentioned here in two ways. First, John Murray had money with him to buy food. Second, there can be discussion about how the money in the church is used, such as to pay the minister and other personnel, supplies, heat and maintenance.

How do people give money to the church? How do children contribute? Is there an offering or collection during the time that they are in the worship service, or in children's worship?

A-B-C

Animals: mole, mongoose, monkey, moose, moth, mosquito, mouse, muskrat

Body (add to Body Picture): mouth

Calendar: March, May, Monday

- Note the date of the session and any special events for the day, including birthdays.
- Note items beginning with the 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 the Letter M. 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

Have additional discussion around the minister, such as interviews with ministers, preparation, importance of minister in a leadership role.

Discuss ministry as something that everyone can do, and ways to minister with a church: assisting with services, working on committees or in the activities of the church—clean-up days, fairs, auctions; visiting, calling or sending cards to people in need.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Murray Grove Retreat and Conference Center,
PO Box 246, Lanoka, NJ 08374
www.murraygrove.org

SIGNS FOR THE READING (Can be put on larger paper or cardboard.)

Mr. Potter
YOU WILL PREACH IN MY CHURCH

Mr. Murray
I WILL **NOT** PREACH IN YOUR CHURCH

Will the winds change?
YES!

Will the winds change?
NO!

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