



Valhjalmur Stefansson

EVERYONE IS SPECIAL



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ALPHABET

Please read the Overview before using this Plan.

S Letter S introduces Vilhjalmur Stefansson, and exploration of the Arctic region, and treatment of Inuits.

MATERIALS: Construction paper Letter with hole punched in top, yarn for necklace
Snacks— Sandwiches, sugar cookies, shakes

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 and 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 Bag.
- Put the things related to the letter in the Special Place

SPECIAL PERSON: Vilhjalmur Stefansson (1879-1962)

Vilhjalmur Stefansson was born in a log cabin in what is now Manitoba, Canada. His parents had come to Canada from Iceland. When he was 2 years old, there was a flood that destroyed everything for miles around, and people were starving because there was no food. So his family moved by riverboat and oxcart to North Dakota, in the United States, where they built another cabin.

Villi, as his mother called him, believed that it was important to keep up with new knowledge, including changing his ideas as he learned more. This was a reason that he was a Unitarian. In May 1900, he was asked by an Icelandic Unitarian minister to attend an

International Conference of Liberal Religions in Boston. He was to ask the American Unitarian Association (this was long before the Unitarian Universalist Association formed) to continue to contribute money for the Unitarian Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He was successful, and met a number of Unitarians who interested him in becoming a minister. But he became an anthropologist, to study the origin and culture of people.

Villi explored the Arctic region of Canada and Alaska, and lived with the Eskimos, who prefer to be called Inuits. He wanted their culture to be protected, and wanted people to know how they adapted to the cold climate, how they shared in their culture. He had a great respect for the people he met on his explorations. He learned skills of surviving in the cold. He even learned how to build an igloo -- in two hours, with help from two friends!

AFFIRMATION: *Everyone is special.*

Sacred, special. The way we treat how other people live is special and sacred. We use the term "sacred" to think of something that is set aside, such as in our worship services. When we think of everyone as being special, we need to think of the culture of people as special, treated with respect so that it is sacred. The Inuits lived so closely with the nature around them, including the ice, the land, and the animals. Villi respected this closeness and did not want other cultures, like with cars and televisions, to spoil it.

Have children think of times when they have been in a setting with natural elements, possibly in the woods or an area in which there are trees and animals. Have them think about what was special about that place -- sounds of birds, animals, water, etc. Children can also do short guided meditations through nature. They can have special places in their minds that they can think about, especially if they are feeling sad or upset.

THE LETTER **S** IN THE CHURCH

Songs: Take time to sing some of the favorite songs of the children and the congregation.

A-B-C

Animals: Seals -- discuss the importance to the Inuit, especially for food and clothing.

Body: Stomach

Calendar: Saturday, Sunday, and September

- 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 the Letter S. 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.

VARIATIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Read some Inuit Stories, especially those related to creation.

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