Soul Work Busy Bags!

What is Soul Work? It's an idea pioneered by Director of Religious Education Joy Berry. Science tells us that certain types of handwork evoke the same brain activity as meditation and prayer. So Joy wondered: what if we could change our ideas about what activities we gave children to busy their hands during worship? As you might imagine, this idea pairs really well with our Makerspace. In fact, some Makerspace projects naturally pivot to become Soul Work during worship. Many of these items are also more in line with our UU sustainability values, as they cut down on throwaway or non-recyclable waste.

Soul Work is for people of any age, so you'll see different items in your resource bags depending on the ages of your kids. Maybe you even have your own Soul Work you bring to worship with you! Here's a guide to our winter 2021 bags:

Under 6:



Felt Playscape

This little play scene offers our children a chance to connect with our seventh principle, respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. The felt is wool rather than acrylic, as that's both more sustainable and more pleasing to the senses. The wooden animal and tree are finished with sustainable dyes.

Button Snakes

Button the felt circles onto the ribbon to make a long "snake!" This teaches manual dexterity that will make it easier for your children to do everything from dress themselves to participate in Makerspace activities. It's also fun for playing pretend! And since snakes are very quiet and only make soft hissing sounds, it's a good pretend to do during church services.



3 and up

Homemade Play Dough



This dry dough mix can be prepared whenever you're ready. Just add ¼ c. of water to the bag, seal it, and let your child knead the bag until the dough begins to come together; then they can remove and play with it! This is a salt dough made with the following ingredients: wheat flour, salt, cream of tartar, and natural food coloring. I've kept the food coloring light, so it won't be as bright as store-bought dough, but it also won't stain your hands or table! Salt dough will hold for a long time between uses if you pop it in the refrigerator, and you can bake items at 200 degrees for 2-3 hours to harden them.

Kindness Rocks!



Kindness really does rock, doesn't it? And this project is a way to spread more of it in your community. Use the enclosed rocks and paint, and the paintbrushes I've sent home to you in summer and fall bags, and paint a design on your rock that makes you happy! Then put your rock somewhere where someone else will find it. Find a spot to leave it during a walk, or put it on your friend or neighbor's porch, or leave it in a spot where a family member will discover it!

Gratitude Chains



Each winter busy bag has at least 20 of these construction paper strips, and your family is invited to use them to make gratitude chains. Take out the first strip and have each family member write or narrate to an adult one thing they are grateful for. Use a stapler, tape, or a glue stick to form the first strip into a loop. Each day, add a new loop to the chain. Continue this practice from now through the 25th.



Button Trees

Please note: I have included plastic needles and blunt-tipped tapestry needles in this kit. If these will not fit through a specific button that you received, parents may have to use a finer needle and help with that one.

These make a lovely decoration for your room, and can be given as a gift, too! Smaller children have larger buttons and plastic needles, or blunt metal tapestry needles. If you don't want to use the shaggy brown yarn to make a trunk, you can paint one, or draw one with marker! Then, sew on the buttons in any way you like to form the "leaves and flowers" part of the tree. You might have to tie a big knot in the end of your thread to keep it from going through the burlap, but that's okay. Save enough room to tie another big knot when your thread is about to run out.

6 and up

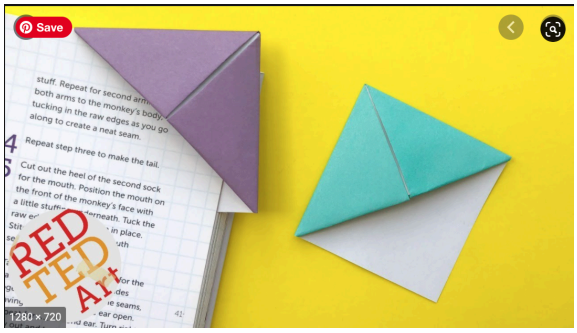


Friendship Bracelet Kits

These are such a great activity to do while you're watching the worship service! I've included some very easy designs that even the youngest children can do, as well as more complex ones for older kids. This project is easier to do if the end is held down. You can tape it to your table, or tie it to your water bottle as many of our youth do. When I was in high school, we used to safety pin the end to our jeans and work on them at our desks while we listened to the teacher. Friendship bracelets make great gifts, helping us welcome our children into the spirit of giving during the holiday season.

Origami

Wouldn't it be nice to have some small animal friends or a little paper chalice around while we're doing our e-learning? Origami is a quiet way to pass the time during worship, and again, might be a good way to create some gifts for others! Use the designs we've included, or look online for many more!



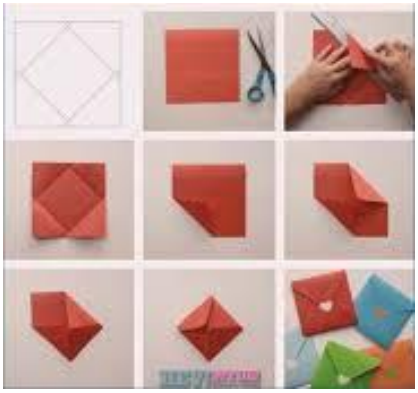
9 and up



Embroidery Refills

To help our kids who've taken to embroidery with their holiday crafting, we're including floss refills, a new stitch guide, and a bit more Stick and Stitch! We're also throwing in a few alphabets, in case they'd like to add someone's initials to a gift or embroider a message.

13 and up



Envelope Making

Make handmade envelopes out of cardstock, magazine pages, and more! Each bag has a template on cardstock and some supplies to get you started. Send a snail mail message to someone at church or a friend who might need a little love.

New Zentangle Designs!

Prefer to do your doodling with a pen instead of a needle? We've got you. Zentangle is a popular form of doodling that uses simple patterns to make cool, complex designs. The coloring pages and postcard designs that Rev. Cynthia Landrum shared with us use Zentangle! In our winter kit, we're including new designs and holiday cards to decorate.

