Wisdom Tale Script
The Tale of Stingy Jack… Reimagined with Compassion
By April Rosario

Leader Note: *To increase the impact of these wisdom tales, we encourage storytellers to memorize the stories and tell them from memory. Click HERE for some storytelling guidance.*

Set It Up

The tradition of carving pumpkins into Jack-o'-lanterns comes from an old Irish tale about a man named Stingy Jack, who tricked people and even the devil. According to legend, when Jack died, he wasn't welcome in heaven or hell. So he was left to wander alone, with only a glowing coal inside a turnip to light his way. When people began carving lanterns and placing them in windows and doorways, some said it was to scare away Jack, others said it was to light the way for lost souls like Jack

It's that second interpretation that we lift up today with this reimagined story of Stingy Jack, inviting us all to view Halloween as a time to compassionately light the way for all and invite everyone home!



A long, long time ago, in a quiet village, there lived a man named Jack. Now, Jack was clever—very clever. But he didn't always use his cleverness to be kind. Sometimes, he tricked people just to get his way. And because of that, Jack didn't have many friends.

One chilly autumn night, Jack walked through the village, cold and tired. The streets were full of families preparing for a fall festival. Jack wished he had someone to talk to, or a warm meal to share, but he had made so many people upset that he was too embarrassed to ask.

As the sky grew dark, Jack wandered into the fields beyond the town. He felt sad and alone. "Maybe I don't belong anywhere," he whispered.

Just then, something amazing happened.

One by one, people from the village came walking down the path—carrying lanterns made from turnips with glowing coals inside. They had been talking together and decided that no one should be left out on festival night—not even someone who had made mistakes.

They didn't come with anger or judgment. They came with light.
One of the children handed Jack a little lantern and said,
"We figured everyone deserves to find their way back home."

Jack's eyes filled with tears—not because of the cold, but because someone had seen him, and cared.

From that night on, Jack tried a little harder to be kind. He helped sweep the market, gave up his seat for elders, and even shared his own lantern on dark nights.

And ever since then, people carve lanterns—first from turnips, and later from pumpkins—not to scare anyone away, but to light the way for anyone who feels lost, left out, or lonely.

Because we believe that everyone deserves to feel they belong.

Sum It Up *(For when the story is used as a TFAA tale in the worship service)*

So friends, I love how this story invites us to ask new questions.

The first: What if we thought of Halloween as a time when we light lanterns — or carve glowing pumpkins — to say:
You're welcome here.
You don't have to wander alone, no matter what you've done.
Follow the light and come home!

And the second question: What if we thought of every day this way?

Discuss It - Reflection to "Build and Bond" *(For when used within a RE session to explore the theme)*

- Have you ever felt like Jack, left out or unsure if you belonged? What helped you feel welcome again?
- Why do you think the villagers decided to come find Jack with their lanterns? Was that an easy or hard thing to do?
- The villagers said, "Everyone deserves to find their way back home." What do you think that means?
- Have you ever seen someone left out? What could we do in that situation?
- What are some ways we can "light the way" for people who feel left out in our class, team, or church?
- In the story, the lanterns became a symbol of welcome and compassion. Can you think of other symbols (objects, colors, actions) that mean "you belong here"?
- How do our UU values encourage us to treat people like Jack—with compassion and equity—even when it's not easy?
- What do you think is the moral of the story or the wisdom we can take from it?