

Working Together

by Susana Martinez

Happy Sabbath, boys and girls. I know a lot of you are already on summer vacation, and I know your teacher has already taken everything off the walls and picked up chairs, left the room ready for the incoming school year. And I was thinking, and this book came to mind, *Stone Soup*. I don't know how many of you know it, but it talks about a community that works together, even though they didn't want to.

It's called Three Monks. Hoke, Loke, and Siu travel along the mountain road. They talk about cat whiskers, the color of the sun, and giving. What makes one happy, Siu? asked Hoke, the youngest monk. Old Siu, who was the wisest, said, Let's find out.

The sound of a bell brought the gaze of the rooftops of a village below. They could not see from so high above that the village had been through many hard times. Famine, floods, and war had made the villagers weary and untrusty of strangers. They had even become suspicious of their neighbors.

The villagers worked hard, but only for themselves. There was a farmer, a tea merchant, a scholar, a seamstress, a doctor, a carpenter, and many others. They had little to do with one another.

When the monks reached the foot of the mountain, the villagers disappeared into their houses. No one came to the gates to greet them. And when the people saw them entering the village, they closed their windows tight.

The monks knocked at the door of the first house, and there was no answer. Then the house went dark. They knocked on the second door, and the same thing happened. It happened again and again, from one house to the next. These people do not know happiness, they all agreed. But today, said Tiu, his face brightened as the moon, we will show them how to make stone soup.

They gathered twigs, branches to make a fire. They placed a small tin pot on top and filled it with water from the village well. A brave little girl who had been watching came to them. "What are you doing?" she asked. "We are gathering twigs," said Loke. "We are making a fire," said Hoke. "We're making stone soup, and all we need are three round smooth stones," said Siu.

The little girl helped the monks look around the courtyard until they found just the right ones, and they put them in the water to cook. "These stones will make excellent soup," said Siyu. "But the very small pot won't make much, I'm afraid." "My mother has a big pot," said the girl.

The little girl ran home. As she started to take the pot, her mother asked what she was doing. The three strangers are making stone soup, she said. They need our biggest pot. Hmm, said the little girl's mother. Stones are easy to come by, but I'd like to learn how to do that.

The monks poked the coal. As smoke drifted up, the neighbors peered out their windows. The fire of the large pot in the middle of the village was true curiosity. One by one, the people of the village came out to see just what was this stone soup about.

Of course, all-style stone soup would be well-seasoned with some pepper, said Hope. This is true said Hope as he stirred the giant pot filled with water and stones but we don't have any. I have some salt and pepper said the scholar his eyes big and curious he disappeared and came back with the salt and pepper and even a few other spices still took a taste the last time we had stone soup of this size and color carrots made the broth very sweet. "Carrots?" said a woman from the back. "A few carrots, but just a few." And off she ran. She returned with many carrots as she can carry and dropped them into the pot.

"Do you think we would be better with onions?" asked Hoke. "Oh, yes, maybe an onion could taste good," said a farmer, and he hurried off. He returned in a moment with the big five onions that he dropped them into the bubbling soup. "Now that's a fine soup," he said. The villagers all nodded their heads as the smell was very agreeable. "But if only we had some mushrooms," said Siu, rubbing his chin. Several villagers licked their lids. A few dashed away and returned with fresh mushrooms, noodles, teapots, and cabbage.

Something magical began to happen among the villagers. As each person opened their heart to give, the next person gave even more. And as this happened, the soup grew richer and smelled more delicious.

So as you can see, the villagers kept bringing stuff to add to the soup. It's that they've never had a party like this before. When the monks left, they were happy because they taught this community about sharing. I hope that when you're home, boys and girls, you help mommy and daddy clean up at home because when you work together, it can be very delicious. And I'm just eating a soup because it started off with stones, right? But everyone brought all the ingredients. Let's bow our heads, boys and girls.

Dear Heavenly Father, we are thankful and grateful for all the great things you do for us. Allow us, dear Lord, to be like these villagers, willing to share what we have with others. Allow us to be helpful with Mommy and Daddy as we are home now for the summer. Keep us safe and protect us, we pray in your name. Amen. Bye, boys and girls.

Till next time.