

PARENT HANDBOOK
Religious Education Program for
Children and Youth
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Centre County
2009/2010



**Jean Wiant, CRE, Director of Lifespan Religious
Education, In consultation with the Religious Education
Committee**

Welcome!

Welcome to the Religious Education program at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Centre County. Our program is about much more than learning. It is about growing, learning, leading, doing, and being in our beloved community!

Here, we seek to provide a safe environment where the spirit of each child will blossom and grow. From the youngest to the oldest, we believe in fostering a sense of worth and belonging, a foundation from which children will develop emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually. As they grow, we seek to provide an enriching environment where children and youth are encouraged to confidently explore life's most puzzling questions. Above all, we are committed to providing a program that encourages all of us to learn and respect what is religious about our own lives.

Children are an important part of UUFCC. We understand that their needs for a religious community are the same as those of an adult: a place to belong with caring and supportive friendships; a place to grow spiritually, developing inner peace, wisdom and understanding of the world around us; and a place to serve in ministry supporting our efforts to live a meaningful life and make a difference in the world. The following pages will tell you more about our program and some of its opportunities for belonging, growing spiritually and serving in ministry.

Our children's religious experiences are founded, but not limited by our programs. Home, school and the whole church community are the arenas where children continue their religious exploration – lifelong.

My role as the Director of Lifespan Religious Education is to help each person in this community grow at his or her own pace, in his or her own way, in his or her own time. Because our community is very diverse, some of our needs are different, and some are the same. There are as many ways to be a part of this community as there are people. It takes all of us to keep the Fellowship rich and diverse, and safe and nurturing.

Yours in faith,
Jean Wiant, CRE, DLRE



Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes (Written for children)

In learning how to make a difference in the world, we are guided by our Unitarian Universalist Principles.

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe that:

- Every person is important and valuable
- All people should be treated fairly
- Our churches are places where we should accept one another and learn from one another
- Each person should be free to search for what is true and right
- All people have the right to speak out and vote on things that matter to them
- We should help build a peaceful, fair and free world
- We need to take care of the Earth, the home we share with all living things.

These ideas come from many places:

- The sense of wonder we all share
- Women and men long ago and today
- People whose lives remind us to be fair and understanding
- Jewish and Christian religions and other religions of the world
- Our common sense
- The discoveries of science
- Ancient traditions and rituals.

Participating in Religious Education

The religious education of the children of the Fellowship is a collaborative venture between parents, teachers, and the children themselves. Each has an important role.

Parents

Parents are the primary religious educators of their children. They have a special role to play in the Religious Education program at the Fellowship. Parents need to be actively engaged in their children's programs through awareness as well as participation. Attend regularly with your children and let them know how much the community means to you. Get to know your child's teachers and find out what you can contribute. Each of us needs to take ownership of the Religious Education program for it to continue to thrive.

Teachers

The teachers are loving and giving members of the community who choose to dedicate their time to the children of this community. Above all, they respect each child and his or her unique spirit and needs. They participate regularly in the program to be a consistent presence in your child's church life. On the first day of classes, each group will define its own rules and expectations that the teacher will enforce consistently, enlisting the assistance of the parent and/or the DLRE as needed. Teachers are bestowed with an important trust to nurture and never harm a child's physical, spiritual, or emotional development.

Children

Children are the center of the Religious Education program, but they also have a role in creating and sustaining them. Children need to be respectful of the teachers who give of their time to be with them as well as their classmates who learn with them and from them. Children help define the group's rules and expectations and are expected to adhere to them. We encourage children to express their gifts, their talents and their viewpoints in order to enhance the RE program. We encourage regular attendance and participation so that your child may feel confident and connected to his/her classmates.

Safety Rules - Please help to enforce these rules for everyone's safety.

Supervision:

- Please do not leave a child unattended in the RE rooms or on the playground either before or after Sunday school.
- Parents should pick up their children from the RE rooms or the playground immediately following the worship service. Although RE teachers will supervise the children during RE class time from 10:00 to 11:00am, parents are responsible for their supervision before and after RE. Children will be brought into the social room at 11:20am if they have not been picked up by their parent(s).
- Parents must remain on the premises and available during RE in case their children need them. Parents will be called if their child(ren) are unruly, unhappy, or unsafe.

Classroom Policies:

- Two adults will be in each classroom during RE class time. In the event that one adult has to leave, the door will remain open while there is only one adult in the room.
- Rooms will remain unlocked whenever a child or minor is present. Visibility through the glass of the doors will be maintained.
- Children's allergies will be both written and told to caregivers.
- No medication will be given to children by RE staff or volunteers. Parents will administer any needed medication to their own child(ren).
- Children in the K-2 class and older may go to the restroom by themselves. The DLRE or the REC Chair will be in the hall at all times to ensure their safety and provide assistance if necessary.

General Policies:

- No running inside the building.
- Exits must be kept clear at all times.
- The DLRE, REC chair, and teachers are mandated to report suspicions of child abuse.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS CONCERNING ILLNESS

It is sometimes difficult to determine when to keep a child home. The following list is a guide to follow when making your decision.

Keep your child home if the child has:

1. a severely runny nose, and/or the mucus is yellow or green in color
2. head lice (3 days nit free, good to go)
3. an unknown rash
4. any communicable disease such as chicken pox, pink eye, ringworm, measles, strep throat, etc.
5. had a fever of at least 100 degrees or higher in the last 24 hours
6. been on an antibiotic less than 24 hours
7. been vomiting or had diarrhea within the past 24 hours.

Please notify the DLRE if your child develops a communicable disease after attending our programs.





REGISTRATION AND CLASSES

Parents should complete a registration form at the beginning of the year or soon after their children and youth begin attending Religious Education classes at UUFCC. Forms are available in the lobby, in the RE wing, or may be obtained from the DLRE, the REC chair, or the teachers. Completed forms should be returned to the office secretary, the DLRE, the REC chair, or the teacher.

The theme this year is Unitarian Universalist Identity. It is the first theme in a rotation schedule of four themes. The other themes in the schedule include The Interdependent Web, World Religions, and Jewish and Christian Heritages. The REC has adopted this theme rotation so that every child will learn about Unitarian Universalism, our 7 Principles and Purposes, our relationship to the web of all existence, religions of the world, and the Jewish and Christian religions, which are part of our Unitarian Universalist heritage. We consider these themes to be the basis for understanding Unitarian Universalism in the context of the religions of the world.

Nursery Room 3

The Religious Education Committee oversees the Nursery. Parents are welcome to stay with their infants in the Nursery. The Nursery has been set up to provide a comfortable place for parents and their infants to nurse, play, sleep, rock, and listen to the service at the same time.

Toddler Room Room 4

The Toddler Room is for children ages 1 to 3, who are walking but may not be potty trained. There will be two paid child-care providers in the room every Sunday. Child-care providers have completed training in childcare and/or CPR.

Pre-K Room 5

Teachers: Sue Smith and Rocky Landers

Assistants: Beth Bailey, Melissa Wright, and Natasha Miles

Curricula: *Chalice Children* and *Celebrating Me and My World*

“Chalice Children” is comprised of 5 units that explore the church as a special place, church as people, celebrating holidays, the wonder of the universe, and making friends. “Celebrating Me and My World” has 3 units that celebrate the wondrous qualities of children and animals, objects, and people around them. These curricula provide experiences and opportunities to grow in trust and caring, and helps pre-schoolers develop their self-identity and sense of connectedness with all of life.

K – 2 Room 6

Teachers: Nancy Davis, Libby Gage, Betsy Brett, Claudia Snyder

Assistant: Destiny Hughes

Curriculum: “Picture Book Unitarian Universalism”

A curriculum based on 36 of the best picture books for teaching young children about our faith. Each session includes entering activities, overview and goal, sharing circle, activities related to the book for that week, and a closing. There will also be a take home page for children and their parent(s) to review during the week.

3– 5 Room 2

Teachers: Janis Jones, Tony Guerrero

Assistants: Erin Spanier, John Schmidt, John Stone, Dayna Carbo

Curriculum: “Spirit of Adventure”

“Spirit of Adventure” is a Unitarian Universalist Identity curriculum with unique themes such as sports, medicine, architecture, science, and food; and active play activities such as circus acts, a take apart party, obstacle course, and a treasure hunt. There will also be a take home page to reinforce the home/church connection.

6– 8 Room 1

Teachers: Laurie Parmele, Colina Seeley, Amber Gray

Assistants: Sara Schumacher, Penny Eifrig

Curriculum: “Compass Points”

“Compass Points” is a curriculum for the questions central to an adolescent’s spiritual journey. Youth will have opportunities to sort out their feelings about themselves and their world; discover what they believe about life’s big questions; think independently, assume responsibility, make decisions, explore values and adopt the practice of radical hospitality; acquire enough background in UU History, polity and theology that they can know and express what Unitarian Universalism stands for; share what they have learned with the congregation; and understand that religious liberty is a hard-won legacy that continues to need protection.

10th-12th Grade OWL Minister’s Office

Certified OWL Teachers: Nigel Wilson, Elaine Jurs, Paula Marden, Andy Richards

The “Our Whole Lives” curriculum was developed by a joint task force of the UUA and the United Church of Christ. It is based on the philosophy of comprehensive sexuality education, which helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. The Sr. High OWL curriculum will help participants clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, social, and political aspects of sexuality as well.

YRUU-Sr. High Room 1 Sunday mornings at 11:30am

Advisors: Andy Richards, Paula Ralph, Elaine Barch, David Stickell, and Dave Porter

Program: The youth will develop their program with the help of their advisors throughout the year, and will include aspects of leadership,

learning, worship, social justice, and social activities.

MULTIGENERATIONAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Children's Time – children accompany their parents to the service in the sanctuary for the first 15 minutes of the service, then go to RE classes (Exceptions – PreK, Nursery and Toddlers)

Intergenerational Services – The Christmas Eve Service at 7:00pm and the RE Sunday morning service in the spring are intergenerational services. People of all ages and families of all sizes are invited to attend.

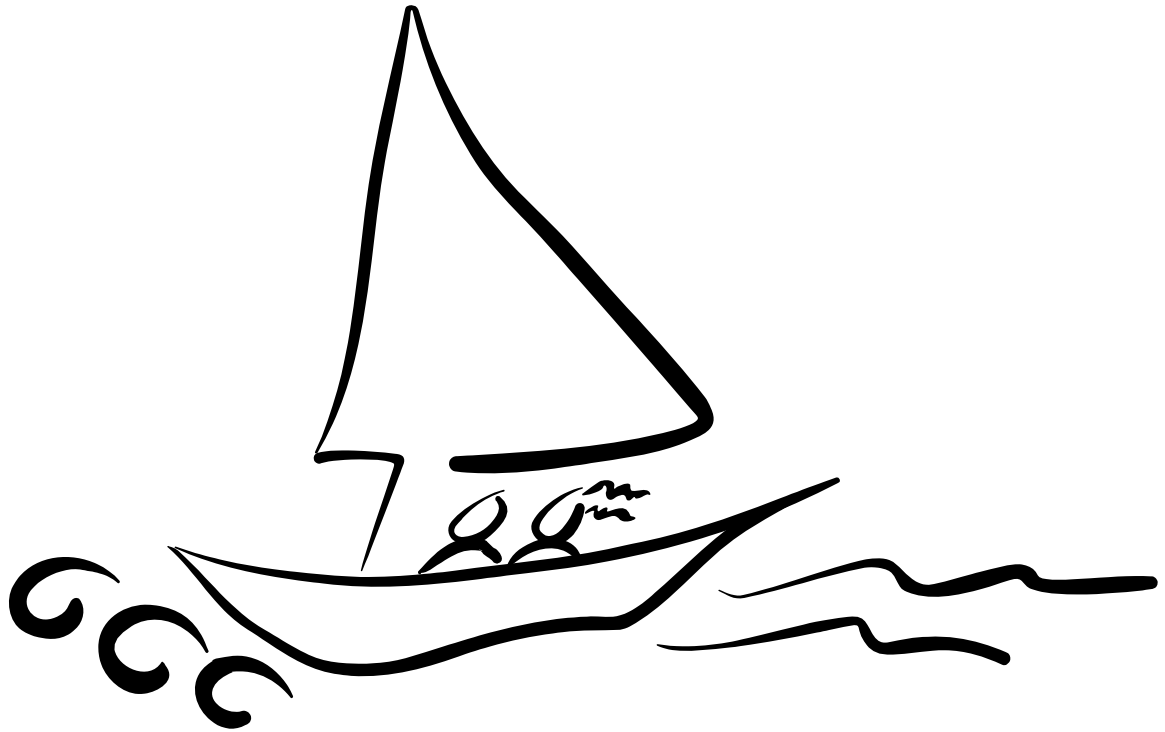
Wonderful Soulful Wednesdays – The 2nd Wednesday of every month, beginning with a potluck supper at 5:45pm, followed by vespers at 6:45pm, and programming for all ages, and childcare for young children.

Family Time – The 3rd Wednesday of every month beginning with dinner at 5:45pm, followed by an activity or worship service. This is a great place and time to get to know other families!

Family Movie Night and Sing-a-Long – November 6th, 6:30pm, costumes and prop bags will be provided, refreshments too! Come see “The Wizard of Oz” and sing-a-long to the songs, dress up in costumes, act out the parts, and facilitate the story with the props provided by the Family Time and RE Committees. Fun for all ages!

Tree Trimming – on December 13TH after the worship service. Everyone is invited to stay and make decorations to put on the holiday tree in the sanctuary!

Mystery Pals – Early February to March, adult volunteers will be matched with children in an effort to bring the generations together in a friendly way. Participants will correspond with each other through mailboxes in room 3 and give clues about their identity. Children will learn who their Mystery Pals are at the end of this 6 week activity.



Discussing Theological Questions With Children and Youth

1. Remember that each child or youth is different and learns differently.
2. Stop and listen to the question. When in doubt, ask that it be repeated.
3. Mirror the child or youth's concern, especially if the questioning is intense. Let him or her know that you hear the feelings.
4. Give yourself time to articulate your own positive belief, and, if appropriate, to express a UU consensus on that issue.
5. It's okay to say "I don't know".
6. It's all right to say that you disagree with other people.
7. Where peer pressure seems very strong on the child or youth, reaffirm that it's natural to have differences, that we Unitarian Universalists like our way of thinking/behaving, and that because we differ from others on some issues doesn't mean we are better or worse.
8. It is important, at times, to say that some things are right, and others are wrong.
9. It is good to keep answers short, simple, and age appropriate. However, it helps to recall that some questions may take a lifetime to consider.

A UU Approach to Some Big Issues

What is God? In our Western world, the word “God” has commonly referred to that power which creates, sustains, and uplifts all life everywhere. Many UU’s today understand God as more inclusive than God the Father, as love, or justice, or beauty, or mystery. Some people speak of God as Mother/Father, when they want to emphasize the personalized, caring aspects of God. Some adopt a distinctively feminine image, as Goddess. Many UU’s do not use the word God at all.

What happens when you die? No one knows for sure. The Universalist side of our heritage teaches us that goodness awaits us, not punishment. When someone dies, his/her memory lives on in us, and this is immortality. Some UU’s believe in reincarnation.

What About Heaven and Hell? Many religious liberals believe that both heaven and hell are states of mind, that both are conditions created on this earth, in this life. For example, war is hell; prejudice is hell; famine is hell. Whereas peace, understanding, and well-being are heaven. That doesn’t mean that UU’s can’t believe in a future life. It means that most of us see the possibility of heaven in the way we feel and live out those feelings about ourselves and the rest of life. And the same is true for hell.



