



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF BLOOMINGTON
Lifespan Religious Education
Handbook
2024-25

Find this document online at www.uubloomington.org/learn/lifespan-religious-education/



UUCB Lifespan Religious Education Handbook

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Introduction

A Word from your Director

Welcome!

This handbook is for everyone connected with the UU Church of Bloomington. Whether you are a long-time member or visiting for the first time, and no matter your age or stage of life, I hope you will learn about our religious education program. I hope this Handbook will help you understand what's available for you, and also for others.

This Handbook is being finalized in August, 2024 – just as we begin a new chapter in UUCB's history with our new settled minister, Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray. No doubt many things in our congregation will change and evolve in the coming years. Some of the information in these pages may be out of date before the end of this year! But for a program that is always evolving, always adapting to our changing world, this will always be the case. For the most up-to-date version, please see our website: www.uubloomington.org/learning.

My hope is that this handbook will help everyone navigate the religious education program, participate as much as possible, and help fill the gaps to create an ever-more comprehensive and effective experience. May we be a community of learners, ever seeking new perspectives, seeing new possibilities, increasing our understanding of ourselves and our world.

-Stephanie

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Sunday mornings at a glance

Schedule

9:30am - Childcare opens

10:15 - 11:15 Worship Service (all ages welcome)

10:30 (approx) - Children and teachers leave for their Religious Education classes*

11:15 (approx) - Community Hour begins in Fellowship Hall (refreshments served)

11:30 - Religious Education classes end

12:00 - 1:30 Youth Group

12:00 - Childcare ends, unless requested for afternoon programming**

12:00 - 5:00 Meetings, classes, and other events (varies by week; childcare available by request**)

* Children are welcome to stay with their families in the worship service if they prefer. Several times per year, we engage in multigenerational worship and no religious education classes are offered during the service. However, children up to age 5 may stay in childcare if they prefer.

**[To request childcare, please use this form](#) or the QR code to the right.



Activities and Room Locations

- ★ Childcare (0-3yrs, or 0-5yrs if no religious education classes are available) - Room 108
- ★ Spirit Play (4-6 years, or grades PK - 1) - Room 105
- ★ Kids' Club (7-12 years, or grades 2-6) - Room 208
- ★ Middle School Youth Group (MSYG) (7th-8th grades) - Room 210
- ★ Youth Group (grades 9-12) - Room 210

Worship Service

- ❖ Many families choose to sit in the section on the far right of the Meeting Room to make it easier to exit during the service, and to access the Soulwork shelves at the back of the room; however, families are welcome to sit anywhere. There is a "Fragrance Free" section on the far left side of the room for anyone with allergies or sensitivities to fragrances.
- ❖ Hearing assistance devices are available from the Media Booth in the back of the sanctuary.
- ❖ Soulwork: many people, including many children, find it easier to listen when their hands are busy. People of all ages are invited to make use of the materials provided on the shelves at the back of the sanctuary (finger labyrinths, coloring pages, pipe cleaners, etc.). Please return reusable items as you leave the sanctuary.
- ❖ Lighting the Chalice: People of all ages are welcome to sign up to light our chalice in honor of their birthday, other special event, or just



in celebration of being a part of this community. To sign up, visit our Church Center registrations page using the QR code to the right, or at uucb.churchcenter.com/registrations.

Community Hour

After the service, all are invited to Fellowship Hall for refreshments and conversation. Coffee, tea and juice are typically available in the Foyer between the Meeting Room and Fellowship Hall; food is available in Fellowship Hall (ranging from light snacks to full meals, depending on the week; donations appreciated).

Staff

Minister: Reverend Susan Frederick-Gray, Lead Minister
Director of Lifespan Religious Education: Dr. Stephanie Kimball
Music Director: Dr. Sue Swaney
Connections Coordinator: Anabel Watson
Technology Coordinator: Hans Kelson
Director of Administration: Amanda Waye
Communications Coordinator: Jo Bowman
Custodian: CJ Waye
Sexton: Dylan Marks
Religious Education Assistant: Eric Branigin
Child Care Staff: Tiffany Walton, Oscar McDermott-Sipe

Philosophy

Religious education is a lifelong process of exploring religious ideas, growing spiritually, learning (and unlearning), reflecting on beliefs and actions, seeking information and experiences, and trying on new perspectives. It is the ongoing, intentional journey toward wholeness that is unique for every individual yet pursued within the relational context of community. It's also a space to ponder the age-old questions of religion: *What is the meaning or purpose of life? How should I live? Why do bad things happen? What is death, and how does that affect how I live? What is God?*

Religious education takes place not only in classrooms, but everywhere. In worship, Community Hour, choir practice, Chalice Circles, childcare, social justice work, committee meetings, social events *and* classrooms, we all continuously learn (and teach) what it means to be Unitarian Universalist.

What we at UUCB refer to as “religious education” most often, though, is the classes, seminars, circles, workshops, congregational reads; book groups, film viewings, discussions, drop-in meetings – the deliberate programming where experiences and spaces are designed with intention to help people along their journeys.

The aims of religious education are different for people at different ages and stages; they can vary for people with different religious histories; and they can shift as our life circumstances change. Some central tenets of our programs remain the same, though:

1. We welcome everybody, just as you are;
2. We strive to create a safe space for everybody, no matter your identities;
3. We encourage growth and learning for all;
4. We support our congregation's vision of Seeking the Spirit, Building Community, and Changing the World.

Our most basic goal is not to provide information but to create a safe, nurturing space for people of all ages, stages, neuro-differences, races, cultures, sexual identities, genders, levels of faith development, and so on. We recognize that a pre-emptive radically inclusive community is the foundation of “putting Love at the center.” We strive to build this beloved community to provide a safe space for spiritual development, journeys toward wholeness, awareness of the world and a drive to act within it. Information is a tool for liberation, rather than an end in itself.

Values and Vision

We strive to offer programming that parallels UUCB's congregational vision of Seeking the Spirit, Building Community, and Changing the World.

Seeking the Spirit: Connecting with our Spiritual Selves

As UUs, we come from many different religious and spiritual traditions, from Christianity to atheism. Some of us carry wounds from earlier experiences in religious communities, which we may need to work to heal. No matter where we are in our spiritual journeys, we can continue to explore fundamental questions:

- Where do each of us find the Spirit of Love and Mystery that some people call God?
- How can we deepen our connection with that within ourselves?
- What skills, habits, and practices can we build that ground, center, and build clarity and resilience?
- How do we cultivate our spiritual connections to the natural world?
- What wounds, fears, and myths keep us from wholeness?
- How have people around the globe and throughout history understood themselves as spiritual beings, sustaining and sustained by religious traditions?

Building Community: UU Identity & Faith Development

In our congregation, we build community each time we engage with one another through worship, educational programming, Chalice Circles, committee and task force work, and all the other things that make up our congregational life together. Religious Education examines the foundations of this community: What is it that brings us together? Who are we as a community, and what do we stand for? How do we as individuals fit into this community? How have our beliefs, as individuals, as a congregation, and as a denomination, evolved over time?

Here are some questions we address in each of several areas of UU identity and faith development:

- What are the values that we, as Unitarian Universalists, hold in common? What is the basis of our faith, and what does that mean for us in relation with each other?
- How and why did our theology evolve as it did? Who are key figures in our history?
- What do I believe? How did I arrive at these beliefs? How can I explain it to people outside of the denomination, when they ask?
- Where do I belong? How do I get involved, or expand my involvement?

Changing the World: Social Justice

While the work of Changing the World may take place primarily through our SJ task forces, Religious Education is concerned with understanding injustices in their historical and cultural contexts, reflecting on our own lives, and exploring frameworks for effective change. This foundational work is necessary as we seek to avoid inadvertently replicating or bolstering the very structures we wish to dismantle.

Here are some of the questions we consider as we educate ourselves about changing the world:

- How have systems of oppression evolved and been sustained throughout history?

- What are the cultural expressions of injustice; how are racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, etc. baked into our culture (schools, government policies, legal system, economic system, entertainment, etc)?
- How have we each internalized systems of oppression around race, gender, sexuality, class, etc.? How can we dismantle those within ourselves, our institutions, and in our world?
- What is our moral/ethical responsibility to act? What kind of action is called for? How are we accountable? Why do we pursue social justice through our church, vs. other organizations? What are some theories of social change? Can we envision and act to help create a more just world?

Anti-Oppression

“The religious education that I envision for the twenty-first century has a commitment to anti-oppression, antiracism, and multiculturalism and prepares learners through education, personal awareness, exercises, analysis, and organizational skill development. This, I believe, would lead us to become whole/holy justice-seeking spiritual institutions of relevance to our youth and the world.”

- Rev. Susan Suchocki Brown (Essex, p. 35)

Our religious education programs strive to be anti-racist and anti-oppressive and to foster right relations through the following actions:

1. Auditing all materials, books, and stories in order to
 - a. Remove anything with racist themes, images, and stereotypes.
 - b. Ensure representation of broad human experience;
 - c. Ensure the presence of diverse voices and perspectives;
2. Ensuring that classroom methods and routines are inclusive and affirming for all.
3. Discussing racism and other oppressions in our institutions and culture, both past and present, in age-appropriate ways;
4. Reflecting on our own internalized racism, privilege, and oppression, and engaging in inner work to change, in age-appropriate ways.
5. Building relationships among people regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, neurotype, or other differences.

Part 1: Parents' Guide to Children & Youth Religious Education

"We do not tell our children what they should believe, but we do them a disservice when we neglect to express to them the heart of our faith. We do them a disservice if we do not help them to develop the tools to explore and create their own faith. One of the essential tools is effective language."

- Jeanne Harrison Nieuwejaar, *Fluent in Faith*, xiv

"The vital components of our UU religion are to awaken the seed of potential within others; to provide pathways to full realization of the gift of self; to awaken through ritual, word, song, and movement the mystery of living, the reverence for and awe of life; and to model believing, feeling, willing, thinking, acting, and witnessing our statements of faith."

- Rev. Susan Suchocki Brown (*Essex Conversations*, p. 38)

Aims of Children/Youth Religious Education

1. To build meaningful relationships with peers and adults in the congregation;
2. To provide children and youth with a strong understanding of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist and reinforce liberal values;
3. To engage in social justice and service activities;
4. To build religious literacy and hold space for exploration of religious and spiritual themes and questions
5. To help create a sense of belonging and purpose in UU communities (both congregational and in the association)

None of these aims are achievable without a sense of safety. Therefore, our first priority is to create inclusive and affirming spaces and experiences for all.

Philosophy

We affirm that parents are the primary religious educators for children. Our religious education programs offer a chance for children and youth to explore and learn in community, exploring big questions, knowing that their ideas, experiences, and perspectives are valued and respected.

We strive to create a safe and welcoming space for all, no matter their gender, race, socio-economic status, learning style, academic experience, or other characteristics

We aim to meet each child where they are, encouraging learning and growth

We honor stages of faith development as well as stages of physical, cognitive, emotional and social development

Getting Connected: Registrations & Database

Register your child/youth for Religious Education

Children and Youth are required to register for religious education each year in order to participate in programs. First time visitors may fill out a Guest Registration card, but we ask that by the child's third visit they be registered.

Registration helps keep children and youth safe, by providing information about allergies, who may pick children up, and how to contact parents/caregivers in the case of an emergency. Registering also helps staff and volunteers welcome children and youth with a nametag, and to be more aware of each person's interests, skills, and special needs. Registration also makes it possible for us to stay in touch, letting you know what is happening in your child/youth's programs and what opportunities may be available.

Registration is simple! Use the QR code below or visit www.uubloomington.org/



2024-25 Registration form for children and youth for religious education programming

Complete your profile in Church Center

Church Center is our congregation's database and communications platform. Even if you have not joined the church as a member, you are encouraged to make sure information for you and your family is complete and accurate.



<https://uucb.churchcenter.com>

Communications

COMMUNICATION IS KEY REGARDING YOUR CHILD & RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Do you know how we communicate with you regarding RE?

- ❖ Weekly emails are sent to registered families about what happened in class and/or what is coming up
- ❖ Church events, connected community events, articles, etc are posted on Facebook
- ❖ You can find our prospectus, calendar and RE News on www.uubloomington.org
- ❖ Church Center app. Please download the Church Center app on your smartphone. This is the easiest way to check the calendar, register for events, make a donation, and send/receive Group messages!

Safety

Safety for all is a priority for Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington, Indiana (UUCB). Even though the congregation and its leadership recognizes that we cannot make any venue 100% safe, we are committed to ensure that UUCB gatherings, programs, and activities are as safe as possible. We are especially attentive to the safety of vulnerable populations such as (but not limited to) children, youth, and older adults.

We achieve our safety goals through:

- ❖ Screening and training all church staff and volunteers who work with children or youth.
- ❖ Supervising our children and youth and those who work with them.
- ❖ Providing a specific process by which allegations of abuse are reported and investigated.
- ❖ Treating all persons with dignity and respect.
- ❖ Requiring those at risk of incident or accusation to refrain from contact with children or youth.

These policies are directed at those working with our children or youth. However all UUCB members carry a responsibility to provide a safe and caring community in which our children and youth are respected, in which their self-worth is affirmed, and in which spiritual, social and intellectual growth are encouraged.

We are committed to the care of our children and youth, and to the principles of fairness, kindness and forgiveness that have long been part of our religious tradition.

General safety guidelines

- Parental supervision of children is required unless expressly handed off to teacher or other adult in charge.
- For the safety of all, children should not run in hallways or other parts of the building.
- Children under the age of 7 must be picked up from religious education by a parent, guardian, or other designated adult. Children aged 7 and up will be dismissed to find their parents in Fellowship Hall, unless parents request otherwise.
- Bullying, name calling, and other forms of aggressive behavior will not be tolerated.
- Signed permission forms are required for all excursions off UUCB property, overnights, and drop-off events.

Read our full Safer Congregations policy [here](#) or navigate to uubloomington.org ->About -> governance -> Board of Directors -> Board Policies -> Appendix E

Parents' Guide to Understanding Our Emergency Action Plan

FIRE:

- ★ In the event an evacuation is necessary due to fire, the religious education team and volunteers will evacuate the children out the courtyard doors (first floor) or the nearest north side door (second floor) and move the children to the back southeast corner of the parking lot.
- ★ Children will only be released to their parent or guardian.
- ★ If necessary, the adjacent property to the south will be used to reunite parents and children.

TORNADO:

- ❖ In the event the tornado siren sounds, the religious education team and volunteers will ensure that children are escorted to the nearest safe place to shelter. Staff and volunteers will help to reunite children with their parents.
- ❖ Rooms 103 and 105 will shelter in the interior hallway in between their classrooms. Room 108 will shelter in their interior hallway and nearby bathrooms. Rooms 208 and 210 will go downstairs and shelter in the hallway outside of Room 108.

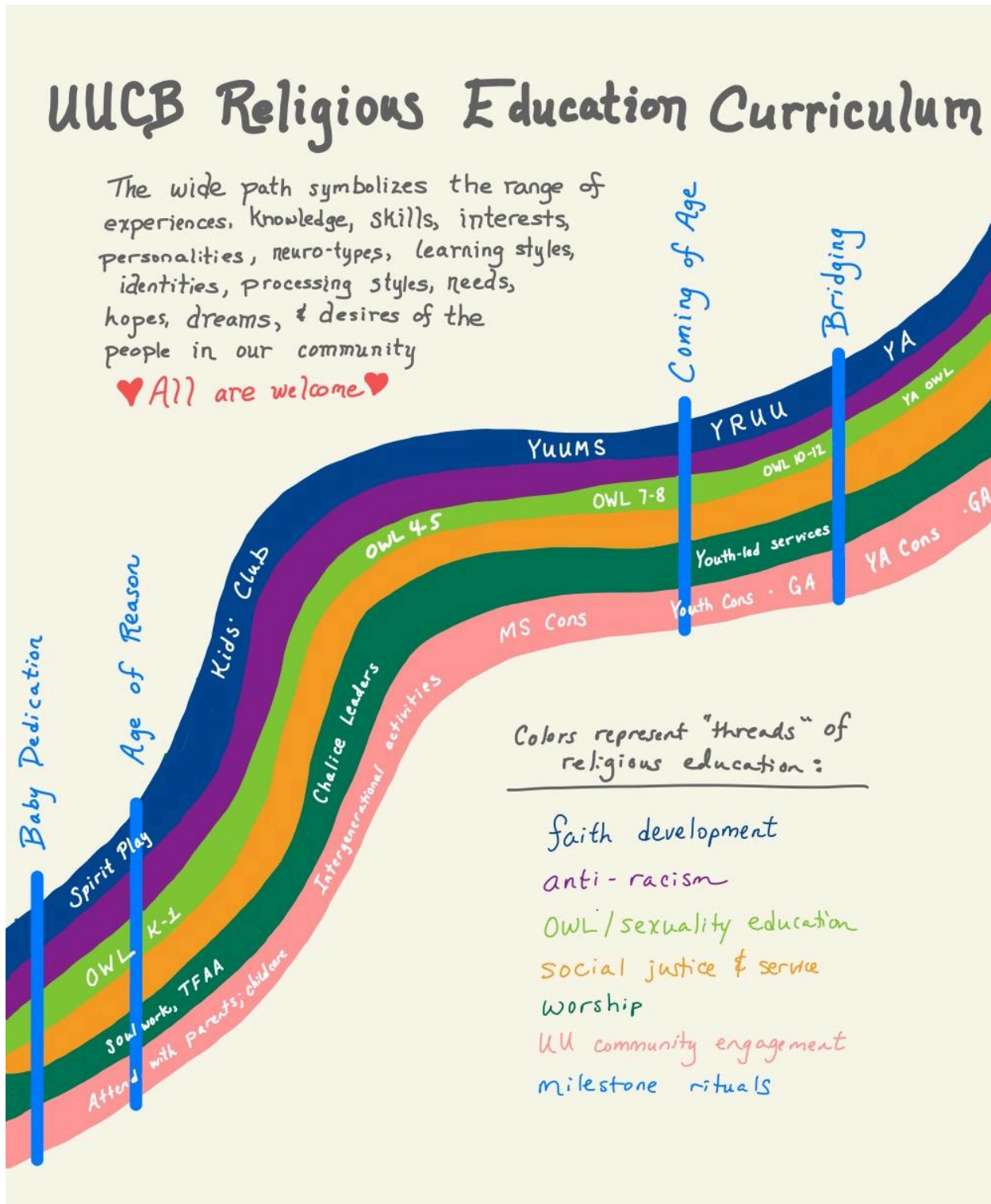
MISSING CHILD:

- ❖ If you lose your child while on church grounds, alert a Greeter, Safety Team member, and/or staff person immediately. We have a plan in place to secure the building and conduct an effective search quickly.

For more information, see our complete Emergency Action Plan. There is a copy posted in each classroom, located near the thermostat or the door.

Core Programs for Children and Youth

The graphic below depicts the range of experiences that constitute children/youth religious education at UUCB. The color-coded text that follows shows how each “strand” evolves over time.



Birth - Age 3

Faith Development

Small children learn to rely on the goodness of the world through the consistency of care received from parents and others. Life experience during this period is critical to developing a capacity for trust, autonomy, and self-esteem.

We establish a sense of safety at home and in the congregation through consistent, loving care.

Anti-Racism

From Rebekah Gienapp:

- ❖ Toddlers *do* notice race, and want to make sense of what they see.
- ❖ Naming skin tone, as well as introducing the racial categories our society uses, helps toddlers label their worlds.
- ❖ We can fight the idea that whiteness is normal or standard by making sure that our children's books and toys include kids of many different races, acting in non-stereotypical ways.

OWL/sexuality education

Sexuality is a natural and healthy part of living. People begin to learn about sexuality at birth and continue to learn throughout their lives.

Children learn about sexuality from how people treat them, talk with them, and expect them to behave.

The messages that children receive affect their future attitudes, values, and behaviors.

All children should be loved and cared for, respected and valued as unique individuals.

Social Justice and Service

Even when children are too young to engage in service work, they are learning about the way the world works and what they can expect from the people around them. This is the foundation for future notions of fairness and justice. As toddlers start to develop greater awareness and independence, we model and reinforce age-appropriate social behaviors and responsible actions, such as helping to clean up toys.

Worship

Babies and toddlers are welcome in worship spaces, and may enjoy certain aspects such as music, visual effects, and eventually, stories. Rocking chairs and gliders are provided with nursing and napping babies in mind. Parents and caregivers are also welcome to make use of the nursery (room 104, across from Fellowship Hall) if they prefer: there is a monitor there where they can watch the service while small children nurse, nap, or play. Childcare is provided in Room 108 from 9:30 am till noon (or later by request).

UU Community Engagement

For these youngest children, community primarily consists of parents and other family members. However, those who spend time in childcare may also bond with childcare staff, and, over time, may come to feel a sense of connection that we would call community. Typically, the congregation is very eager to welcome and care for these youngest additions to our church community, and to witness their growth and development over the years.

Milestone Rituals

Our first milestone ritual is our Baby Dedication.

Our baby dedication is a public declaration of our love and caring for the children of this community. It is the celebration of a new life, a baby. It is a time when we all promise that we will take part in the spiritual nurturance and teaching of this baby. When we dedicate babies and young children, we recognize that every child is part of our vision for the future, and all youngsters have a just claim upon their families and upon our religious community, to be nurtured in the ways of sharing, of love, of hope, laughter, tears, and just living an awesome life.

In the Act of Dedication, we use the symbol of the rose dipped in water. Water is a sign of our common heritage on this planet. There is no suggestion here of a washing away of inherited sin. This baby came into this world with all the natural limitations and splendor of being human, and they arrived innocent. Water here stands for vitality, the essence, and foundation of our being.

As a token of the dedication, the rose is given as a fragrant symbol of beauty, promise and love. This rose has no thorns, symbolizing the better world we try to give our children that is within our power.

Nuts and Bolts: Childcare

Infants and young children have several options on Sunday Mornings:

- ❖ attend service with their parents
- ❖ find a calm and quiet place in the nursery (Room 104) where there is a live feed of the service and room for small children to play while parents are in close proximity
- ❖ explore Childcare in Room 108

Childcare is available in Room 108 on Sunday mornings typically from 9:30am to 12:00pm, and until 2 or 3pm (or possibly later) by advance request. If childcare is needed for meetings, classes, or other church-related events, please make a request, ideally at least 2 weeks in advance, and we will do our best to arrange it. The more lead time given, the more likely it is that we will be able to find staff available! Please use this [form to request childcare](#).

We have a caring and attentive childcare team who are here on Sunday mornings to provide care for infants-3 years old. Our vetted and trained childcare team is made up of youth who have grown up in this congregation, adults who have utilized childcare for their own kids, and young adults who are friends of this church and support our mission and vision. Stories, music, and lots of play! Parents and Caregivers are asked to sign their child in and out of childcare and introduce themselves and their child(ren) to the staff.

FYI: Parents and Caregivers, there are diaper changing stations in Room 104 and Room 108. Rocking chairs are also available in both rooms for more comfortable spaces for feeding your infants. In 108, there is a monitor where you can view the service. There is a family bathroom near the courtyard doors, and another in the hallway opposite the Childcare room which contains step stools and small child-size toilet rings for your convenience.

Childcare Policies

1. Unless you are a first-time visitor, please register your child (see link above) and make sure their information is up to date in our Church Center database (link above).
2. Upon arrival, please sign your child in, making sure to include ALL information on the form.
3. Please let childcare staff know if you plan to pick up your child later than 12:00.
4. During the worship service, please leave your phone on vibrate in case the childcare staff need to reach you.

Age 3-6

Faith Development

The classroom, materials, activities and stories found in our Spirit Play program are specially curated for the faith development stage of 3-6 year olds. At this age, children find rituals to be comforting, and the atmosphere we create is formative. They are watching, wonder-filled, and mood-sensitive. Their imaginative play tends to be imitative: for example, children may pretend to be characters in a movie they've seen, encountering scenarios like those in the movie. They will often approach this play through scripting, and may demand that others playing with them follow particular scripts. This is how they take on a worldview.

We take children's imitation seriously, as this is their developmental work. We are intentional about what stories we offer them for imitation. We invite them into classroom rituals both to bring comfort and to support their development. Following the philosophy of Maria Montessori, the Spirit Play classroom is set up to convey a sense of calm and order; we strive to provide objects made from natural materials, arranged thoughtfully, and providing visual cues that help people know where to put things away. Our teachers are trained to be intentionally calm, joyful, interested, relaxed, and trusting. The stories told exemplify our UU values and principles. We encourage children to wonder together about the meanings and implications of those stories.

Anti-Racism

From Rebekah Gienapp:

- ❖ When young children make biased remarks or ask questions about race, it's important to ask for their thoughts first.
- ❖ We must set firm limits for children that it's not okay to reject someone based on their identity.
- ❖ Shaming children for saying something racist can make them defensive, hampering our efforts to raise antiracist kids.
- ❖ Preschool age children can learn the names for races that our culture uses, showing them that it's okay to talk about race.
- ❖ Vague statements about treating everyone fairly won't help young children understand how to spot racism or speak up against it.
- ❖ White children need opportunities that help them become resilient in the face of racial stress, such as not being in the racial majority all the time.
- ❖ As kids learn about racism, they may say they're glad they're white. We can share how we want people of color to feel safe in the same ways that we already do as white people.

OWL/sexuality education

Our OWL K-1 program helps 5-7 year olds begin the lifelong process of acquiring information and forming attitudes and values about identity and relationships, safety and health. At this age, children gain an increasing awareness of the concepts of gender, race and ability. They also learn that other children live in families that may be similar to or different from their own. They are curious about their bodies, other bodies, and bodily functions. They have questions about pregnancy and childbirth, wondering *How did I get here? Where did I come from?*

Goals of OWL K-1 Program:

- ❖ To strengthen and support each child's sense of self and self-esteem
- ❖ To help children understand the place of sexuality in human life and loving
- ❖ To help children recognize and appreciate their bodies as good and beautiful, private and special
- ❖ To help children gain understanding of and accurate information about human sexuality, reproduction, and gender identification
- ❖ To help children prepare for the normal changes they will experience as they grow and develop
- ❖ To help children develop effective communication skills
- ❖ To help children learn to make decisions that respect themselves and others and that anticipate possible consequences
- ❖ To help families engage with the Our Whole Lives program in open communication about all life questions
- ❖ To strengthen parents' and caregivers' roles as their children's most important sexuality educators

Social Justice and Service

Young people lay the foundation for social justice and service work when they learn to be responsible first for themselves. Children are encouraged to clean up after themselves, being considerate of the next person to use the space and also taking care of our shared resources. Children are encouraged to wait their turn, and to share when that is appropriate. Teachers and childcare staff model respectful behavior by asking before moving their work or showing it to others, for example. In Spirit Play classrooms, many stories center around people engaged in social justice activities or other acts of service.

Worship

Children ages 3-6 typically stay with their parents to participate in the first portion of our worship services before going to childcare or their religious education classes. We encourage children of this age to notice our weekly rituals: the ringing of the World Bell that calls us to worship, the lighting of the chalice flame, standing in body or spirit to join in singing a hymn, being still and quiet together at times and laughing and singing together at others. During multigenerational services, children are invited to participate with their parents in lighting candles for joys and

sorrows as well as other aspects of worship. In the back of the sanctuary there are coloring pages, pipe cleaners, finger labyrinths, and other types of Soulwork available for people of all ages who benefit from keeping their hands busy. Young children often enjoy coming to the front of the sanctuary for the Time for All Ages, since they can often see and hear better from there.

UU Community Engagement

At this age, children begin to build a sense of community with their peers and in their spaces. The rituals in the Spirit Play classroom (waiting to enter until ready to join the circle; lighting the chalice together; listening while the Story Teller tells the story; choosing works to explore; cleaning up after themselves; joining the group for a closing game; saying goodbye to the teachers) build a sense of belonging and predictability.

In Community Hour they might play outside in nice weather, making use of climbing equipment and other activities such as sidewalk chalk, bubbles, hoola hoops, balls, and outdoor games. Inside, they can find age-appropriate puzzles and games at the Intergenerational Activity Table. Refreshments include juice and/or hot chocolate as well as coffee and tea, and efforts are made to provide kid-friendly foods as part of our lunch offerings.

Milestone Ritual: Age of Reason

Each year, our first graders are invited to participate in our Age of Reason ceremony and celebration, in which we honor children reaching another stage of development – beginning the journey of independent learning and reading. This is a very exciting time for families and children as they gain new ways of learning about and investigating our world. The Age of Reason Ceremony is one of our Congregation's most cherished traditions. Parents are invited to choose a book to give to their children during the ceremony, and afterwards together we celebrate various ways of learning and knowing.

Nuts and Bolts: Spirit Play

Spirit Play is a story-based approach to religious education that honors and encourages each child's search for truth and meaning. Each week's story invites exploration of UU themes, principles, sources, history, and/or traditions. Drawing from Maria Montessori's approach to childhood education, Spirit Play reflects Unitarian Universalist values of respect for the worth and dignity of each person, and the free and responsible search for truth and meaning. At UUCB, we currently offer Spirit Play classes for children ages 4-6, although this approach can be adapted to any age — including adults!

This class meets in Room 105 during the worship service, except during multigenerational services and on Religious Education holidays. Children attend the worship service for approximately 15 minutes before heading to their classes; they may be picked up at 11:30am.

Two specially trained Spirit Play teachers facilitate each class. As children arrive they are greeted by the Doorkeeper, who helps them with their nametags and makes sure each is ready to join the circle. The Story Teller begins the class with a chalice lighting ritual, then introduces the story for the week. Each story is told using carefully designed props stored together in a story basket. The Story Teller concludes the story with wondering aloud together about the meaning(s) it may hold for the children, then carefully puts it away on an accessible shelf so that the children may work with it if they choose during their exploration time.

The DoorKeeper then introduces any special “works” available for the day, and the children are dismissed as they’re ready to choose which activity to start with in their time of exploration. Adults strive to observe silently, assisting only when asked, encouraging children to wait their turn, share, and clean up before moving on to a new activity.

Parents are welcome to observe the class at any time, but are asked to do so from the observation chairs rather than joining the circle. Children who are not ready to separate from their parents are welcome to sit with them until they feel comfortable joining the children in the circle. The reason for this is that Spirit Play is a place for children to explore their own spiritual identity, necessarily apart from their parents. Teachers will help reluctant children feel comfortable with their peers, and are available to discuss any concerns with parents after the class.

Age 7-12 (Grades 2-6)

Faith Development

At this age, children attend Kids' Club on Sunday mornings. This is a time for learning the stories, practices, and lore of our faith community – those things that inspire the faith, values and actions of adult Unitarian Universalists. It's important at this time for children to know and feel that they are real members of our UUCB community, and as such they are members of an on-going tradition. Classes offer opportunities to think about living out our UU values and principles, including opportunities for service to the congregation and the broader community. This is also a time for children to explore why things are right or wrong, perhaps imagining how they would feel if certain things happened to them. Teachers may witness their own faith (i.e. "What it means to me is.... What I do is... I believe...")

Children at this age may try on beliefs, values, observances and stories as their own. They may process through play rather than discussion. In Kids' Club we strive to create space for experimentation and exploration, imaginative play in which they can make meaning out of the stories and experiences they encounter.

Building community with peers is extremely important at this stage, especially in the upper elementary years. The stronger these relationships, the more likely they are to continue to be involved in middle school and beyond.

Anti-Racism

From Rebekah Gienapp:

- ❖ The early elementary years may be an important developmental window in which cross-racial friendships have the greatest impact.
- ❖ Kids need to know that race is not biologically real, but that it is a real concept socially.
- ❖ As parents, we can make sure our children learn complex versions of history that they may not be taught in school.
- ❖ Speaking up about racist remarks made by family or friends takes courage but is essential modeling for our children.
- ❖ Kids need to know that "racist" is a descriptive term of particular ideas, actions, and policies that harm people of color, not a slur that implies someone is beyond the ability to change.
- ❖ Metaphors like the moving walkway help kids understand why we must take action to undo systemic racism.

OWL/sexuality education

Our Whole Lives sexuality education is offered in alternating years to 4th and 5th graders. For this age group, the goals of this program are:

- ❖ To strengthen and support each program participant's sense of self and self-esteem
- ❖ To help young people understand the place of sexuality in human life and loving relationships
- ❖ To encourage young people to appreciate their bodies as good, beautiful, private and special
- ❖ To provide young people with accurate, developmentally appropriate information about human sexuality, reproduction, and gender
- ❖ To prepare young people for some of the changes they will experience as they grow and develop
- ❖ To help young people develop the interpersonal skills – including communication, decision-making, and problem-solving skills – that will help keep them safe and healthy
- ❖ To help young people learn to make responsible decisions that show respect for themselves and others
- ❖ To help families communicate openly
- ❖ To strengthen parents' and caregivers' roles as their children's most important sexuality educators

This curriculum covers a range of topics – health and safety, media and body image, love, family and friends, puberty and growing up, sex and gender, communication, and decision making – in age-appropriate language. Activities, stories and resources set the context for learning about diversity and practicing respect.

Social Justice and Service

During the elementary school years, children at UUCB have many opportunities to engage in social justice activities. In Kids' Club, they may help create blessing bags for people experiencing homelessness, or assemble lasagnas to take to a local shelter; they organize food and clothing drives; they make eco bricks to take plastics out of circulation. They also learn about the importance of social justice work to Unitarian Universalists, and engage with the stories of our spiritual ancestors. Their class may also take on a service project for the church community. In addition, children in this age range often accompany their parents as they volunteer with our various social justice task forces or community organizations.

We emphasize the importance of building a just world, and the fact that we can all contribute acts of kindness and service and also work toward building more just social structures that benefit all.

Worship

Our third graders (and beyond) are invited to participate in multigenerational worship services by becoming Chalice Leaders. In a workshop typically held in August or early September, participants learn about the various components of our worship services and why they are important to us. We then practice using various types of microphones and performing certain rituals (i.e. ringing the world bell, lighting and extinguishing the chalice). After completing this introductory training, Chalice Leaders are invited to sign up for multigenerational services that they are able to attend, and are assigned parts in those services. Children and youth can specify whether they would like speaking or non-speaking roles, and can change their preferences at any time.

UU Community Engagement

Elementary-aged children begin to understand themselves as members of our church community as they participate in an increasing number of ways. Engaging in service and social justice activities, leading portions of worship on a regular basis, attending Community Hour and other church events helps children understand themselves as members of the community. Children at this age develop an initial sense of personal membership in communities beyond the immediate family, and benefit from invitations for joining/belonging/taking full part. This year we will pilot an "Adopt an Aunt/Uncle" program as a way to build cross-generational connections with adults in the community.

Nuts & Bolts: Kids' Club

This group explores what it means to be Unitarian Universalist. Through stories and discussions, activities and service projects, participants learn about Unitarian Universalist history, theology, values and principles -- and what all this may mean to their own lives both now and in the future. They get to know members of our congregation, learn about their work and what draws them to this church, and build connections. They also build friendships and explore the possibilities for their own roles in our Unitarian Universalist community.

Kids' Club consists of children in grades 2-6 or the homeschool equivalent, and meets in Room 208 during the worship service, except during multigenerational services and on Religious Education holidays. Children attend the worship service for approximately 15 minutes before heading to their classes; they may be picked up at 11:30am.

Age 12-14 (Grades 7-8)

Faith Development

Middle school is a time to invite youth to think more deeply, to explore the “why” of what they have chosen to believe or do, to look beyond their group to understand others, to encourage their idealism and find constructive outlets for it. We strive to give them models from our tradition, and from our congregation; for example, they might interview adults in the congregation, not as saints, but as humans who they can identify with. This is an important time to help youth confront their own conformism, to begin thinking for themselves and making autonomous decisions. Service is an important part of the middle school program: as idealism grows, social justice and social action can become an outlet for energy and a source of identity-building in the context of community.

This is a time of major development of their own spirituality and personal faith. People in this stage often borrow beliefs, ideas, stories, practices, and lore, and may find abstractions, symbols, and myths increasingly helpful.

Anti-Racism

From Rebekah Gienapp:

- ❖ White kids’ peers of color are becoming more aware of how racism impacts them. We can help our teens be good friends by teaching them not to be defensive when racism is called out.
- ❖ Middle school age children often get basic factual information about race wrong. We must directly address the stereotypes they are absorbing.
- ❖ We can use specific strategies to keep white teens from feeling neither superior because of their race, nor feeling that being white can only equal being racist.
- ❖ Middle schoolers are old enough to understand the systemic aspects of racism.
- ❖ Educational tracking intensifies in middle school. It’s important for parents to address and interrupt the racist stereotypes kids may be absorbing from tracing.
- ❖ We can practice antiracist media literacy with our kids as we watch movie trailers and look at ads and magazines.
- ❖ It’s important to identify white saviorism, so that we can avoid it when we take action.

OWL/sexuality education

Our Whole Lives for 7th & 8th graders is offered in alternating years. The goals of this program are to:

- ❖ Affirm and respect themselves as sexual persons (including their bodies, sexual orientation, feelings, etc.) and respect the sexuality of others

- ❖ Increase comfort and skills for discussing and negotiating sexuality issues with peers, romantic partners, and people of other generations
- ❖ Explore, develop, and articulate values, attitudes, and feelings about their own sexuality and the sexuality of others
- ❖ Identify and live according to their values
- ❖ Increase motivation and skills for developing a just sexual morality that rejects double standards, stereotypes, biases, exploitation, dishonesty, and harassment
- ❖ Acquire knowledge and skills for developing and maintaining romantic and/or sexual relationships that are consensual, mutually pleasurable, non exploitative, safe, and based on respect, mutual expectations, and caring
- ❖ Increase knowledge and skills for avoiding unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections
- ❖ Express and enjoy sexuality in healthy and responsible ways at each stage of their development
- ❖ Assess the impact of messages from family, culture, religion, media, and society on sexual thoughts, feelings, values and behaviors

Social Justice and Service

Our middle schoolers engage in service projects throughout the year, learning about various causes, choosing which ones to support, and helping to design projects. This teamwork helps build community while also reinforcing growing concepts of justice and a sense of agency.

Worship

Middle schoolers are encouraged to continue to act as Chalice Leaders, and may take on additional roles in worship services depending on their interests. For example, older Chalice Leaders may wish to perform special music, choose or write chalice lighting words, help with the offertory, prepare Soulwork for younger children, etc. Middle schoolers may opt to sit together for the first part of worship before heading to their religious education class.

UU Community Engagement

Middle schoolers are encouraged to participate in regional middle school “cons,” (conferences) where they meet other young Unitarian Universalists, build relationships, and have fun while learning more about their faith and what it means to be a UU. They are also encouraged to participate more in the life of the church.

Nuts & Bolts: Middle School Youth Group (MSYG)

Our 6-8th graders meet in the Youth Room, 210, during the service, departing the Meeting Room with their teachers after the Time for All Ages.

Age 14 - 18 (Grades 9-12)

Faith Development

At UUCB, we strive to create balanced youth ministry programming by considering the “Six Pillars” and making sure they are represented throughout our work over the year. These Six Pillars are Building Community, Social Action, Worship, Learning, Leadership and Congregational Involvement.

- ❖ **Building Community:** The social aspect of youth programming, community building offers time to bond, share values, establish trust, generate intimacy and practice acceptance. It is the time we spend getting to know one another.
- ❖ **Social Action:** One of the ways we, as Unitarian Universalists, express our faith in the world. This can take many forms, including service projects, witness events, advocacy campaigns, education, and community organizing. Doing social action as a youth group may be a single event during the year or longer-term engagement with certain issues.
- ❖ **Worship:** An important and meaningful aspect of youth ministry, worship may take place as part of youth group gatherings, as non-traditional “circle worship,” or with youth involvement in weekly Sunday services. Typically, our youth group plans an entire Sunday service for the congregation every year.
- ❖ **Learning:** Learning happens during many youth group events, whether they are social action, leadership, worship and even social gatherings. We aim to build spiritual exploration and development into activities. Curricula, discussions and skill-sharing sessions are also great opportunities for learning.
- ❖ **Leadership:** Youth leadership takes many forms, from elected positions within a youth group and service on committees to taking on responsibility for individual projects or jobs. Making space for youth leadership gives youth the opportunity to learn to work together, facilitate, foster cooperation, and collaborate with others.
- ❖ **Congregational Involvement:** Congregational involvement means having the opportunity to share one’s gifts with the congregation, connect across generations and participate in the life of the congregation – not just the youth group.

Anti-Racism

At this age, youth benefit from talking about what they experience and witness both in their immediate environments and through the news and other media. This is a time to examine “what happened” from various perspectives, exploring how race, gender, age, economic status, and other aspects of identity influence our perceptions, actions, intentions, and understandings. Youth may benefit from bystander training, workshops on identifying and responding to microaggressions, and trainings on allyship.

OWL/sexuality education

While there is an OWL curriculum available for grades 10-12, our tradition at UUCB is to offer it only upon request. At present, it is under revision and unavailable until the new edition is complete.

Social Justice and Service

Social action is one of the “pillars” of youth group described above. High school youth are also encouraged to participate in our congregation’s Social Justice Task Forces either as ongoing members or in support of particular activities.

Worship

Youth are encouraged to attend worship services each week. The youth group experience typically includes planning a Youth-led service each year. This is an opportunity for high schoolers to think about the aims and experience of worship, and explore together what messages they wish to share and what music, words, or other experiences they will incorporate to do so. During this time, youth also learn and develop other styles of worship, as mentioned above.

UU Community Engagement

One of the highlights for this age group is participating in Youth Cons (or conferences). Youth may also attend the UUA General Assembly together, further widening their experience of Unitarian Universalism by meeting youth, ministers, and others from all over the United States and Canada. These experiences help young people develop a sense of Unitarian Universalism as a movement, rather than as one particular congregation.

Milestone Rituals

Coming of Age is offered each year for tenth graders or every other year for ninth and tenth graders together – depending upon the demographics for those two age groups as well as other factors. In this program, youth are paired with an adult mentor from the congregation, and they participate together in monthly gatherings, attending worship services, doing service work for the church and in the community, and pursuing their common interests. In the monthly meetings, youth explore their own spirituality, theological beliefs, and commitments. Toward the end of the program, youth share their credo statements in a special worship service widely beloved by the congregation. Upon completion of Coming of Age, youth are invited to join the church as members if they wish.

Bridging marks the end of a young person’s participation in children/youth programming. Our Bridging ceremony celebrates the transition from high school to whatever is next in each person’s path.

Nuts & Bolts: Youth Group (YRUU)

Youth gather on most Sundays, typically from 12:00 – 1:30pm in Room 210. Activities include games, social justice projects, field trips, helping with special events, art and craft projects, and more. In 2024-25 we look forward to participating in Youth Cons (conferences), getting to know young UUs from congregations around Indiana and neighboring states.

OWL

Our Whole Lives (OWL) is a comprehensive, lifespan sexuality education program providing accurate and inclusive information at an age-appropriate level.

Comprehensive sexuality education empowers individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions about their bodies, relationships, and identities. It promotes safety, consent, respect, and the celebration of diversity, all of which resonate deeply with our values. By providing accurate and inclusive information, we equip our children, youth, and adults with the tools we all need to navigate our lives with integrity and self-awareness. We recognize that access to comprehensive sexuality education is a matter of social justice, impacting issues of health, safety, and human rights.

Over a two-year period, classes are typically offered for Kindergarteners & 1st graders, 4th & 5th graders, and 7th & 8th graders. (See Part II, Religious Education for Adults, for information on Adult OWL offerings). Letters or emails are sent to parents inviting their children to participate in the appropriate classes as they are offered. **Please make sure your child's birthdate and grade level are correct in our [database](#)** so that you will receive all the relevant communications!

Parents are required to attend an informational meeting before their children enroll in OWL programs. This is a chance to meet the facilitators, learn about the curriculum, and sign a permission form. Because community building is such an important component of the OWL experience, families are asked to commit to attending regularly.

For more information about Our Whole Lives, please visit <https://www.uua.org/re/owl>.

Children & Youth Leadership Opportunities

Chalice Leaders

Children and youth in 3rd grade and up are encouraged to join our Chalice Leaders program. Participants attend a workshop held in August or September to learn about our worship services and our sanctuary, meet the minister and staff involved in worship, and practice using microphones, candles, and other tools. Those who have completed the program are invited to sign up to help with multigenerational worship services, in speaking or non-speaking roles according to their preferences and the needs of the service.

Youth Volunteers

Youth 14+ are welcome and encouraged to apply for paid or volunteer positions in childcare, and to help with children's religious education classes.

Additional volunteer opportunities include:

- Java Crew
- Help with congregational lunches
- Greeters
- Flame Keepers
- Social Justice Task Force projects

Speak with Anabel Watson, Connections Coordinator, for additional ideas and information.

Lifespan Engagement Team

Children and youth are welcome to join the Lifespan Engagement Team to help plan and carry out intergenerational activities ranging from Community Hour to special events. Please contact Stephanie Kimball for more information.

Resources and Support for Parents/Families

Parents are their children's first, and primary, religious education teachers. At UUCB, we take seriously our responsibility to support parents in this important role. Please reach out if you are in need of books, classes, support groups, or simply want to chat!

Books and materials

Our UUCB Library offers a curated collection of books on a wide variety of topics that can help people deepen their understanding and practice of Unitarian Universalism. Topics particularly

relevant to parents and caregivers include spiritual development in children, mindful parenting, anti-racist parenting, talking to children about death, gender, sexuality and other challenging topics.

Parent groups

Parents are invited to join one or both of our parent groups: Parents of Children and Parents of Youth. These are informal lay-led groups that help build community, share information, and provide mutual support.

In addition, parent groups form on occasion to address particular issues or common concerns. Such groups can be structured, facilitated, or informal and leaderless, depending upon the needs and interests of participants. If you are aware of a need or have an idea for a support group, please contact the Director of Lifespan Religious Education.

Parents' Night Out

Sometimes what parents need most is simply a break! We strive to offer Parents' Night Out 6-10 times per year, depending on interest and the availability of childcare staff. Watch for announcements in Perspectives and the Friday Update, as well as the Religious Education bulletin board in the foyer.

Typically, Parents' Night Out is held on a Friday evening from 5:30 - 8:30pm. Parents drop off their child(ren) ages 3-12 for an evening of games, crafts, free play, and possibly a movie. Infants and toddlers are welcome as long as the staff:child ratio is adequate. Registration is required. Suggested donation is \$30/child, but parents are encouraged to choose the donation level that is comfortable for them.

Children/Youth Religious Education Development Team (CY-RED)

This team works in collaboration with the Director of Lifespan Religious Education (DLRE) to plan, promote, and implement religious education programming for children and youth. The CY-RED team consists of congregants with interest and/or expertise in one or more of the following areas: young children, elementary children, middle and high school youth, child development, OWL, anti-racism, neurodiversity, and faith formation.

The group meets 4-8 times per year, either in person, via Zoom, or multi platform; occasionally there are materials for the committee to review between meetings, and various other tasks to complete outside of meetings. Team members decide what time commitments are reasonable and sustainable for them.

The CY-RED team collaborates with the Director of Lifespan Religious Education in the following ways at various times throughout the year:

- Brainstorm program possibilities
- Review religious education plans
- Help plan special events
- Recruit volunteer teachers, facilitators, and others

- Review RE policies, structures, and future needs
- Solicit congregational feedback
- Promote RE programs and events
- Provide feedback on communications platforms
- Review statements of core values, mission and vision, and goals

Those who wish to join the Children & Youth Religious Education Development Team are encouraged to contact the Director of Lifespan Religious Education.

Part II Religious Exploration for Adults

Introduction

One fundamental difference between religious education for adults vs. children and youth is that there is no definable “path” for adults to follow. Adults come to our congregation with unique histories: some have been nurtured by their religious experience, some come with religious trauma; some come as lifelong Unitarian Universalists, and some have no history with organized religion. Within a congregation, adults may have widely differing beliefs, understandings, interests, learning styles, and availability.

While we can’t define a path that fits everyone, we can describe areas of focus to help make sense of the broad expanse of religious education. We suggest that each person consider their own familiarity with these topics, and seek out the experiences that might help answer their most pressing questions.

- **Spiritual Growth & Practices.** On our journey toward wholeness, we seek to better understand ourselves, own our spiritual/religious past, heal old wounds, discover and develop our strengths, build trusting relationships, and more. We can grow our capacity for reflection, awareness, connection, mindfulness, compassion, groundedness, and staying calm in the face of turmoil by learning and engaging regularly with spiritual practices. Spirituality can be defined as “a feeling of Connectedness to something greater than oneself, experienced through cultivating a relationship with oneself, one’s community, one’s environment, and one’s perception of the transcendent” (Sarah E. K. Lentz). Strengthening those connections can deepen our joy, peace, understanding, and life energy.
- **UU Identity.** Whether we were raised in a UU congregation, are longtime members, recent arrivals, at some point we must ask ourselves what does it mean to be a Unitarian Universalist? To answer this question, we look to our heritage, learning the stories of our Unitarian and Universalist predecessors and how the two groups came to merge; we look to Article II of our UUA Bylaws to see how we have collectively defined our purpose (currently in Principles and Sources, possibly soon in terms of Values); we listen to the words of present-day Unitarian Universalists and their various perspectives on our faith

and what it means; we examine our UU rituals and practices to learn their origins and understand their meanings.

- **Theology and Religion.** Unitarian Universalists do not prescribe a theology that people must accept in order to call themselves Unitarian Universalists. Instead, we covenant to affirm and promote our own and others' searches for truth and meaning. To do this, it can be helpful to consider age-old questions and to understand how various religions have answered them, using this awareness to help develop our own responses and build our own belief systems.

In *House for Hope*, John Buehrens and Rebecca Parker write that "America's liberals and progressives need greater awareness that at the core of social and political issues lie competing responses to the classic questions posed by theology. Effective work for social change requires people of faith who are theologically literate and engaged." They go on to describe a progressive theology that "recovers and reconsiders the hope-filled religious frameworks that inspired generations of activists to work for women's rights, racial equality, economic justice, and peace; ...embody reverence for the sacred, nourish community life, carry forward the aspirations of our forebears, and respond to legacies of violence and injustice that harm our bodies and souls." *While Unitarian Universalists do not subscribe to a creed, neither are we completely on our own to invent our individual theologies.*

- **Unitarian Universalism in Life.** Unitarian Universalism is often criticized (typically from within) for being overly intellectual or theoretical. In addition, we do not adhere to a set of rules for living that might seem to make it relatively straightforward to figure out how to "live" our faith. So we have the potential for a great deal of personal and community growth when we explore the question, what Unitarian Universalism means with respect to parenting, relationships, community, work, school, and other basic aspects of our lives.
- **Anti-oppression.** We acknowledge that we, as a faith tradition and as individuals, exist within a white supremacist, patriarchal, and colonialist culture, all of which are contrary to our Unitarian Universalist values and principles. We must, therefore, work intentionally to understand and dismantle these forces in our own lives and our organizations.
- **Social Justice.** Social justice work begins with education: we educate ourselves on the issues, and raise awareness among others to grow a movement. But to be effective in our actions we must also ask ourselves some faith-related questions: *Why am I drawn to this work? What inner work is necessary to ensure that I am coming from a place of love, humility, compassion and respect, rather than fear, guilt, or rage? What difference does it make? What cautionary tales should I be aware of to avoid doing harm in my efforts to help? How do I form healthy, respectful relationships with those I am serving? Am I listening well?*

Some questions that often drive adult religious exploration and growth:

How can I make the world a better place? Why?

How did I become who I am? Can I still change?

What is Beloved Community? How do we build that?

Is there a god? What is God?

How can I raise my kid(s) to respect all people? How do I encourage reverence as well as rationality?

How does Unitarian Universalism inform my relationships?

What's my racial identity? How does that affect my experience in the world?

What does it mean to heal?

Why do bad things happen?

What should I do?

Is there more to life than _____?

What is life about? What am I called to do?

What helps me grow?

What is Unitarian Universalism all about?

Where did it come from?

What does it mean to be a liberal religion?

What is salvation? Who needs it? Who is saved? From what?

What does it mean to pray?

How do I make sense of the faith tradition I grew up in?

**Who am I?
Who are we?**

What does it mean to be an elder?

What is my sexual identity? Where did that come from, and how does it shape my view of myself and the world?

What if we disagree?

WHAT DO I DO WHEN I HAVE CAUSED HARM?
WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT COLLECTIVE HARM DONE?

What is True? What is Important?

How do I stay open to the universe/mystery/beauty/spirit?

What do I want from a religious community now? What do I want to leave behind? What do I need to redefine?

What happens when we die? How, then, should I live?

How do I cope with change and loss?

What does it mean to belong? Do I belong here?

Should I be a member of this church?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LEAD?

What is my role in this community?

2024-25 Adult Religious Education

Creative Expressions: “Making Things” as Possible Paths to Spiritual, Psychological, and Emotional Growth

This class explores the creative process through drawing, painting, and collage using a variety of materials. Entering “creative flow” often involves a shift in consciousness from verbal thought and expression to non-verbal “thinking in images,” which may share some of the same characteristics as meditation or prayer. This class invites participants to experience themselves in new ways and open themselves to personal growth. No drawing or painting experience necessary. This time, the class will also include exploration of 'process painting' as described by Jenny Hahn in her book *Creative Flow*. Facilitated by Jeanne Myers. Meets in Fellowship Hall from 11am to 12:15pm on these Saturdays: October 12, November 2, November 16, November 23, and December 14. Open to 12 participants, ages 17+

Spirit in Practice

This class helps Unitarian Universalists develop regular disciplines, or practices, of the spirit—practices that help them connect with the sacred ground of their being, however they understand it. Topics of the ten hour-long workshops include personal and communal spiritual practices, practices undertaken with the mind and the body, and others that involve creativity and social justice engagement. All congregants ages 18 and older are welcome; childcare will be provided.

Facilitated by Linda Pickle and Daniel Reed. Meets 12:00 - 1:00pm on these Sundays: October 13 and 27; November 17; December 8; January 12 and 26; February 9 and 23; March 9 and 30. Participants may register for all workshops, or choose particular dates and topics. A more detailed prospectus is available by contacting Linda or Daniel.

OWL (Our Whole Lives) for Adults

Over the course of 12 sessions, the Adult Our Whole Lives Program explores sexuality issues for adults of all ages using values, communication skills and spirituality as starting points. The OWL program helps participants build an understanding of healthy sexual relationships, affirm diversity and accept and affirm their own sexuality throughout their lives. Our Whole Lives presents sexuality as a good, creative force with enormous potential to enrich as well as to generate life. Facilitated by Abby Gitlitz and Matt Stonecipher. Meets on Monday evenings, 7-9pm: November 11, 18, 25, December 2, 9, 16, January 6, 13, 20 and 27, February 3, 17, 24, and March 3. Minimum 10 participants.

A Journey through UU History

Have you ever wondered how the Unitarian Universalist church evolved? Where this way of doing church came from and who the leaders and founders of the Unitarian and Universalist movements in Europe and North America were? Come find out in this one-day workshop led by Stuart Yoak. Saturday, November 2, 10am - 3pm.

Money Management for Young Adults

Join in a discussion about managing your money, including budgeting, saving and investing with your values, goals, and lifestyle in mind. Geared toward young adults, but open to all. Part of our emerging Lifespan UU Lifeskills program. Led by Andrew Appel. *Note: Andrew is not a certified financial planner; he offers his perspectives as a person with a long-time interest in money management, but cannot give specific investment advice.* Sunday, October 20, 12-1:30pm

Dreamwork

Humans have shared personal dreams in community since ancient times. This 6 week group experience will consist of 2 hour sessions where we come together to share dreams using a method developed at the Haden Institute (hadeninstitute.com). We will review a Jungian approach to dream work, explore ways to recall and value our own dreams and create a safe container of confidentiality and trust for dream sharing. Our dreams come in service to wholeness and healing. By sharing personal dreams in a trusted group, insights can be gained for all group members. There is an opportunity for participants to explore the collective wisdom of a personal dream. While only the dreamer can really know what their dream means to them, we will be asking ourselves "What does this dream have to say to me about my own journey to wholeness?" The dreamer often gains new insights and possibly "aha" moments of recognition of new meaning of their dream. Facilitated by Mary Mahern. Meets on Monday evenings, 6:30 - 8:30pm: September 30, October 7, 14, 21, 28, November 4. Participants will be expected to commit to attend all meetings if possible. Attendance at the first meeting is required to participate. (Minimum 6 participants; maximum 8 participants)

Owning Your Religious Past

The majority of Unitarian Universalists come into this tradition from other religions. Some bring with them angry and unresolved feelings about experiences in other religious institutions, while others have warm memories. Some move easily into an identity as a Unitarian Universalist; others experience a traumatic estrangement from family and from the center of their culture. This workshop provides some simple tools through which people may re-examine and retrieve positive aspects of past religious connections, and begin to let go of others. Facilitated by Stephanie Kimball. Meets on 5 Wednesday evenings, 6:30 - 8:30pm: September 25, October 2, 9, 16, and 30.

UU National Novel Writing Month Group

From the National Novel Writing Month website (NaNoWriMo.org): “National Novel Writing Month began in 1999 as a daunting but straightforward challenge to write 50,000 words of a novel in thirty days. Now, each year on November 1 hundreds of thousands of people around the world begin to write, determined to end the month with a first draft. They enter the month as elementary school teachers, mechanics, or stay-at-home parents. They leave as novelists.”

Whether you consider yourself a writer (yet) or not, join us this November for camaraderie and support! We'll provide a daily writing prompt, and once a week we'll have a space to write (and snack) together. Hosted by Stephanie Kimball. Sign up to receive daily writing prompts and to be notified of group writing times.

Death Cafe

Everybody dies. Yet we do not talk about it. Therefore, we periodically host a Death Cafe: a chance to be together to eat cake and talk about death. Why? We know that talking about death to the point that we normalize it as a part of life helps reduce anxiety about our own death and the death of loved ones – and helps us live more fully.

Death Cafe was started by Swiss sociologist and anthropologist Bernard Crettaz who organized the first Cafe Mortel in 2004. Since then, Death Cafes have been held all over the world, some on a monthly basis, some online, all with the same intent: to normalize the undoubtedly normal fact of our own mortality.

It's important to note that Death Cafe is NOT counseling, nor is it a grief support group. It is simply a place to talk, and listen, about our thoughts and feelings around death. Meets 3:00 - 5:00pm on October 27, December 8, February 2, April 20, and June 1. Please register to help us prepare well.

Facing Death with Life

This program, written by the Rev. Kate Walker and Lee Ann Wester, facilitates a process of personal reflection, learning, and spiritual growth focused on the topic of death and dying. Drawing on a variety of contemporary religious and secular resources, it helps participants move from viewing death as an abstract concept to developing a personal recognition of its meaning in their lives. Facilitated by Stephanie Kimball. Meets on Monday evenings, 6:30 - 8:30pm, from March 24 through May 12.

Indigenous Studies Working Group

Join with others who are interested in the history as well as present-day situation of the people on whose ancestral homeland our church was built. This is a self-paced exploration of books,

videos, websites, museums, and more -- with each participant taking on only what his/her time and energy will allow. Regular discussions will enable us to explore together and learn from each other, as we continue on our journeys to understand our past, seek justice, and build right relations.

Times, dates, frequency, and location of meetings will be determined by the participants during the month of September, and may evolve over time.

What Moves Us: Unitarian Universalist Theology

(10 90-minute workshops)

Explores life experiences of historic and contemporary Unitarian Universalist theologians, inviting consideration of theological questions that moved each of them.

Co-facilitated by Stuart Yoak and Stephanie Kimball

Building the World We Dream About for Young Adults

(8 two-hour workshops)

Specifically tailored to the experiences of young adults, this program cultivates knowledge, skills, and capacity to address issues related to race, ethnicity, and cultural identity.

UUA Common Read: Authentic Selves

The 2024-25 UU Common Read is [Authentic Selves: Celebrating Trans and Nonbinary People and Their Families](#) (Skinner House, 2023).

Through interviews and photo portraits, the subjects of this book invite readers into their real lives--their revelations, challenges, joys, and networks of support. From the foreword by transgender activist Jazz Jennings and her mom and fellow activist, Jeanette Jennings, through the resources offered at the book's end, this Common Read invites UU groups to explore the nature of living authentically and the ways connections among us help us thrive.

As the book ends, Peggy Gillespie, who conducted the interviews, writes, "...the journey of self-discovery continues for the participants and for you, the readers. Whether you are trans and/or nonbinary, questioning your identity, have trans and nonbinary loved ones, or perhaps all of the above, please remember always that you are not alone. In every moment of your lives there are opportunities to strengthen your pride and acceptance of all people, including yourselves."

Additional Classes that are offered periodically

Listening In: A Circle for Spiritual Deepening

This class invites individual spiritual exploration and deepening, in the context of community. Participants commit to attend regularly; choose a daily spiritual practice; engage with provided resources between sessions; meet monthly with a spiritual director; and honor the group's covenants.

Credo-Building Workshop

This workshop is designed to help participants figure out what they believe about some theological questions (such as the meaning of life and death; the nature of human beings, and our place in the universe). Readings, conversation, writing, reflecting, sharing, etc.

Forgotten Christianities: Diversity of Belief & Practices Among Early Christians

This reading and discussion group explores the rich and very diverse religious world that arose in the first centuries after the life of Jesus.

Poetry as Spiritual Practice

A series of five meetings will focus on sharing poems that the participants bring to the group. The first meeting will give participants a chance to talk about what "spiritual practice" means to them and about why they joined the course. Literary analysis is NOT the purpose of the course; rather, practice in experiencing poetry as a vehicle for spiritual practice is the goal.

“Do the Work” Racial Justice Education Group

This informal discussion group gathers on Zoom to talk about what we learn as we make our way through the *Do The Work Activity Book* by W. Kamau Bell & Kate Schatz.

The Inner Work of Age

In the words of Connie Zweig, “Aging is our next frontier - a physical, emotional, moral, cognitive and spiritual frontier. Its mysteries and its terrors need to be faced consciously and mindfully, and this book offers the inner tools we need to do just that. We can only truly reinvent late life from the inside out.” Together, we will work through Zweig’s book *The Inner Work of Age: From Role to Soul*, taking time to do the work ourselves and support each other in the process.

Have an idea for a new class?

Please submit proposals for Adult Religious Education classes using [this form](#) (or QR code). Proposals are accepted on a rolling



basis, but must be received by April 30 for primary consideration for the following year.

Adult Religious Education Development Team

This group is tasked with helping to dream, plan, and implement adult religious education programming.

The group meets 4-8 times per year either in person, via Zoom, or multi platform. It consists of 3-7 people representing a variety of facets of adult religious education at UUCB, including those with interest in programming specifically for young adults, parents, or elders as well as interest/expertise in areas such as OWL, anti-racism/anti-oppression work, theology, Unitarian Universalism, spiritual growth, inner work, humanism, religious traditions, teaching and learning, social justice, ministry, etc. There are occasionally materials for the team to review between meetings, and various other tasks to complete outside of meetings. Team members decide what time commitments are reasonable and sustainable for them.

The A-RED Team collaborates with the Director of Lifespan Religious Education in the following ways at various times throughout the year:

- Brainstorm program possibilities
- Review religious education plans
- Help plan special events
- Recruit volunteer teachers, facilitators, and others
- Review ARE proposals
- Review RE policies, structures, and future needs
- Solicit congregational feedback
- Promote RE programs and events
- Provide feedback on communications platforms
- Review statements of core values, mission and vision, and goals

Those who wish to join the Adult Religious Education Development Team are encouraged to contact the Director of Lifespan Religious Education.

Part III General Information for all

Fuchs Library

Our library is located in Room 206, and is named after Ralph and Annetta Fuchs (pronounced "Fewsh")

In 2024, our Library Team created a digital catalog, and, with help from our Tech Coordinator, developed an electronic check-out system. Everybody is invited to sign up for a library account and get your very own UUCB Library card. If you want, you can browse our collection from your home computer or your phone, and then check out books using the scanner in the library.

- **Get your library card.** Stop by the Library during Library Hour (see below) to create an account and get your library card.
- **Library hour:** The library is open each Sunday from 11:15 to 12:00 for you to browse, check out, and return books. You are welcome to visit the library at other times as long as the room is not reserved for a meeting.
- **Browse online.** Go to <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/UUCB> to browse our collection.
- **Check out books.** Please see the scanner on the counter in the Library for instructions on checking out books.
- **Return books.** Books may be returned to the wooden crate on the counter in the Library
- **Support our Library.** If you would like to donate a book, please contact Ginny Richey of our Library Team for current collection needs.
- **Book Table.** Proceeds from the Book Table go toward our Library budget. The Book Table sells books of interest to Unitarian Universalists on most Sunday mornings during Community Hour in Fellowship Hall. Contact Glee Noble for more information.

Summary of Religious Education Volunteer Opportunities

There are many, many ways to support your religious education programs at UUCB! Whether you can offer an hour per week or an hour per year, read on to see how your skills and preferences match with our needs. Please contact Stephanie Kimball to volunteer in any of these roles, unless otherwise noted.

Sunday morning teachers for children & youth

Teaching children and youth religious education is a vital service to the church community, and a wonderful way to connect with our young people. In addition, most teachers find that they learn a great deal as they reflect on their own experiences and beliefs in response to activities and discussions with children and youth.

All teachers are trained and supported in their roles. Curricula, lesson plans, and materials are provided. There are always at least two adults in the room whenever children or youth are present. Typically, teaching teams trade off lead and assistant teaching roles, and each volunteer determines how many class sessions they will help with.

Youth advisors

Youth group typically meets after service on Sundays from 12 to 1:30pm in Room 210. Youth advisors help youth develop leadership skills, gradually shifting leadership of the group from adults to the youth.

Adult Religious Education facilitators

If you have an area of expertise or interest, perhaps you would like to share it with others by leading an adult religious education class. To propose a course idea, please fill out this form: <https://uucb.churchcenter.com/people/forms/705629>

OWL facilitator

If you are interested in becoming a facilitator for Our Whole Lives sexuality education, please contact Stephanie Kimball.

Library Team

The Library Team determines our library policies and procedures, maintains our collections, creates and maintains library accounts, reviews and recommends books, and more. Please contact Ginny Richey to volunteer.

Childcare volunteer

When paid staff are not available, we call on childcare volunteers to step in. Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age; volunteers under the age of 18 must have an adult volunteer or staff person present.

Religious Education Development Teams

Please see the sections on Religious Education Development Teams for descriptions of roles and responsibilities.

Chaperone youth lock-ins, cons, and other overnights

Each year, there are overnight events that require adult supervision. It's very helpful – necessary at times – to have adults in charge for the overnight hours who are not the adults providing programming in the daytime! Covenants regarding behavior (including lights-out and quiet hours, etc.) are written and agreed upon by all participants.

Provide transportation to youth events

Adults providing transportation to youth events must have a valid driver license and proof of insurance.

Lead workshops demonstrating or teaching your skill, hobby, or other area of interest

We often have needs for particular skills or knowledge base. This is a great opportunity to support your religious education program without necessarily needing to make a long-term commitment!

Communications

Perspectives.

This monthly mailing features reflections and news from all areas of our church community. Archives of past issues can be found on our website.

Weekly mailings

With each of our classes for children and youth we strive to send weekly updates so parents know what their children did and will be doing in their religious education classes.

Age/grade dependent mailings

We often send targeted emails or paper mailings to families inviting individuals to participate in appropriate classes, activities and events. For example, parents will be sent information about upcoming OWL classes, Age of Reason and Bridging ceremonies, and other opportunities. NOTE: It is extremely important that your child's Church Center profile is complete and up to date, in order to receive the appropriate notifications and invitations! Please contact religious education or office staff if you are unsure how to do that.

Website

Please see www.uubloomington.org/learning for comprehensive information about religious education. We strive to update content at least monthly.

Facebook

Follow us on Facebook to receive updates and announcements!

Bulletin Board

Check out the Religious Education bulletin board in the Foyer for news and information regarding religious education programs and events.

Sources:

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DeFur, Kirsten, and Amy Johnson. *Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education for Grades 4-6, 2nd edition*.

Brown, Susan Suchocki. "For the Generations to Come." In *Essex Conversations: Visions for Lifespan Religious Education*.

Fowler, James. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*.

Gienapp, Rebekah. *Raising Antiracist Kids: An Age-by-age guide for parents of white children*

Gerfao, Sierra-Marie. ["Faith Development Theories and Implications for Ministry and Family Life \(2023\)"](#)

Karesh, Rose Anne. ["James Fowler and Spiritual Development: Stages of Faith"](#)

Morgan, Peg Boyle. ["Faith Development and Implications for Unitarian Universalist Children and Youth Religious Exploration: A synthesis of the work of James Fowler, Thomas Groome and Rev. Eugene B. Navias"](#)

Nieuwejaar, Jeanne Harrison. *Fluent in Faith*.

Solot, Dorian, and Marshall Miller. *Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education for Grades K-1, 2nd edition*

Wilson, Pamela M. *Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education for Grades 7-9, 2nd edition*