

Unitarian Universalist Community Church

Religious Exploration Program Prospectus 2011-2012

Supporting an ever-unfolding search for truth



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Religious Exploration Mission Statement

In support of the church's mission statement:

The mission of the Religious Exploration Program is to nurture lifelong learning and integration of the Principles, Traditions, and History of Unitarian Universalism.

Religious Exploration Vision

We seek to help our children, youth, and adults:

- Find joy and solace in their connections at the UUC;
- Reside in an atmosphere that allows each of us to realize our own worth and potential as well as celebrate the worth and potential of others;
- Explore ideas that strengthen spirituality and values discernment;
- Integrate our Unitarian Universalist Principles into daily life through thoughts and actions.



Religious Exploration Philosophy

At the Unitarian Universalist Community Church, it is our philosophy to approach Religious Exploration as a creative process for all ages, which empowers all who participate to nurture a spiritually meaningful life: a life examined, mysterious, dedicated and particularly informed by our rich Unitarian Universalist heritage.

- A life examined by dual standards of reason and morality
- A life open to mystery within and between living beings
- A life dedicated to purposes greater than the interests of the individual
- A life informed by our UU Heritage: Spiritual, intellectual, ethical

Recognizing Religious Exploration as a process, our goals in RE at the UUCC are to

- Offer planned learning opportunities with intentional outcomes such as intellectual growth through open-mindedness and the development of rational thought through questioning and healthy skepticism,
- Offer rich and diverse methods for sharing information in order to engage the many intelligences of our population
- Introduce and uphold a variety of spiritual practices in order to nurture healing and transcendence
- Model right relationship, living by the UU principles, in order to foster lasting relationships
- Build a supportive community through caring and connective activities which emphasize social justice and an awareness and respect for diversity
- Celebrate every Sunday morning and at other times as the spirit moves us, especially rites of passage such as birth, coming of age, bridging, croning and death.



Our Unitarian Universalist Guiding Principles and Sources

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OR PROMISES

As Unitarian Universalists, we have seven principles—or rainbow promises—which help us to live in right relationship with our community.

The Red Promise:

Respect the inherent worth and dignity of every person (Present)

The Orange Promise:

Offer loving kindness to all (Heart)

The Yellow Promise:

Yearn to accept and Learn about ourselves, others, and Mystery (Flame)

The Green Promise:

Grow by Exploring What is True and Right in Life (Flower)

The Blue Promise:

Believe in our Ideas and Act on Them (Bell)

The Indigo Promise:

Insist on Freedom, Justice, and Peace for All Beings (Dove)

The Violet Promise:

Value our Home, Earth, Which We Share with All Living Things (Earth)

Please look for the Rainbow Promises Arch over the doorway to the Spirit Play Room and see the symbols we use to represent each promise.

WE ARE INFORMED BY MANY SOURCES

The Direct Experiences of God and Wonder and Mystery;

The Prophetic Words and Inspirational Deeds of Women and Men who Work for Justice, and Love, and Peace;

Wisdom and Spiritual Practices from World Religions;

Jewish and Christian Teachings, which remind us Above All to Love One Another;

Humanist Teachings of Reason and Science;

Teachings of Earth-Centered Traditions that Celebrate Harmony with Nature.

The Children and Youth Sunday Morning Program

At the UUCC, we offer our children and youth a morning Religious Exploration Program. Our program includes

- Spiritual growth opportunities,
- Unitarian Universalist faith development,
- UU History, and
- Ethical and moral discernment to help negotiate daily life
- Emphasis on faith in action through service challenges throughout the year

Religious Exploration Classes run from September through May.

First-Service (9:15-10:30)

Worship

Generally, our first-service program begins with Young UU Worship at 9:15 in our Fellowship Hall. Young UU Worship centers us, reminding us to take a breath and be part of a powerful and supportive faith community. We often hear a story that keeps us mindful of important concepts such as acceptance, caring, good decision-making, and leaps of faith. Our rituals of chalice lighting and benediction hold our worship together at each end, and many and various methods of worship fill in the middle.

First Sundays are special. We begin in the sanctuary (Big Church) to celebrate Faith in Action. We hear a Time for All Ages before the children and youth are sung out by the congregation to join their age-specific classrooms.

On occasional Sundays, we celebrate a multigenerational experience, gathering together for worship that engages all ages. These special services may include Ingathering, Harvest Communion, Winter Holidays, Spring Holidays, the Coming of Age Service, the Peace Jam Service, the Religious Exploration Celebration Service, and Flower Communion.

Classes and Curriculums

Nursery (ages 4 and younger):

We employ four caregivers, two of whom will be present each Sunday to share time with our youngest UUs. Nursery care is available at both services, every Sunday.

(The nursery is next to the Fellowship Hall)

Chalice Children (ages 5-7, grades K-1)

Rainbow Children: This curriculum offers an affirmation of every person's worth and dignity. Children explore sameness and differences and UU identity through hands-on activities.

(Meets at 71 Winthrop St., upstairs)

Explorers (ages 7-9, grades 2-3)

Picture Book Bible Tales: Stories from the Bible with a UU emphasis.

(Meets at the 6 Summer St., downstairs)

Navigators (ages 9-11, grades 4-5)

Spirit of Adventure: UU identity through sports, food, science, medicine, building/creating.

(Meets at 6 Summer St., upstairs)

Seekers (ages 11-14, grades 6-8)

Compass Points: Opportunities to discover each individual's beliefs about life's big questions, to practice radical hospitality and to assume responsibility.

(Meets at 6 Summer St., upstairs)

Senior Youth (ages 14-18, grades 9-12) Youth Group

This group focuses on faith in action at the local level and dovetails with the work Senior Youth do as a part of the Peace Jam Program.

(Meets at 6 Summer St., downstairs)

Second Service (11 a.m.-noon)

Worship

We begin our second-service worship in the sanctuary (Big Church). We share a Time for All Ages to help us all better understand a certain theme for the day. The children are then sung out by the congregation and gather for Spirit Play.

Programming

Spirit Play, for ages 5 through 18, Kindergarten through High School. (71 Winthrop Street, upstairs to the left) Spirit Play is a multi-age, hands-on religious exploration program based, in part, on the teachings of Maria Montessori. Spirit Play honors multiple ways of learning in a concrete environment rich with story, spirituality, and art, where children can work out their own answers to existential questions while learning to live out their values in a community of multi-aged children.

We begin with a sharing circle to discuss the story before each child chooses something to work with in order to reflect on the story. We have quality art supplies available for the children, along with yoga mats, building blocks, pasting and beading, and music for movement.

Spirit Dancers: Twice a month, Spirit Dancers will share an opportunity to explore spirituality through movement. The Spirit Dancers gather in the Fellowship Hall during service, after the Time for All Ages. All ages are welcome.

Additional Youth Programming

At the UUCC we strive to meet social and spiritual needs of our youth as their faith community. We want our youth to leave the RE program with a very good idea of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist, a person of a liberal religious faith. We hope they will know the fulfillment and security a faith community holds for each and every individual willing to become part of a connected group of loving people who celebrate life in all its mystery. We also work together to understand the power of faith in action to affect change for good in our world.

Coming of Age (Ages 12-14):

The youth meet each month to explore a variety of daily spiritual practices as well as work on leadership skills, UU identity, and good old fun. The program features a ropes course, a trip to Boston, and a year-end service presented by the youth during which they will read their statements of belief (or credos) and be recognized as emerging young adults. Parent participation is needed for several aspects of this program. There are monetary costs for field trips. Financial aid is available. Coming of Age is offered on alternate years from OWL for grades 8 and 9.

Peace Jam (Ages 14-18)

Peace Jam is a social-action leadership program that meets monthly to explore peace work, engage in a service-learning project, and enjoy each other's company. The program includes a Peace Jam Conference in the spring and culminates in a Peace Jam Service for our congregation. The youth involved study a Nobel Peace Prize winner throughout the year whom they will meet at the Peace Jam Conference. Participants in this very special program must meet requirements of attendance and service to participate in the Peace Jam Conference. There is a monetary cost for the conference, and for field trips. Financial aid is available.

Our Whole Lives (OWL)

OWL is a series of age specific sexuality education curricula: grades K-1, grades 4-6, grades 7-9, Adult and Young Adult. OWL provides participants with age-appropriate information to help them make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. (Not all ages are offered each year.) OWL for grades 8 and 9 is offered on alternate years from Coming of Age.

Movie Nights (Ages 11-18)

The Junior Youth (ages 11-14) and the Senior Youth (ages 15-18) meet separately one Sunday evening a month to share pizza, movie, and time together in a social setting.



Adult Programming

We offer periodic workshops, classes and discussions on a variety of topics: Bible studies, UU identity, Building Your Own Theology, Book and Movie discussions, Social Justice issues. If you are interested in leading a program, discussion group or class, please contact Rev. Carie Johnsen.

See the Bulletin Boards in the Hall, the church newsletter, and the web calendar for offerings.

Multigenerational Opportunities

Throughout our church year, we strive to provide religious exploration and worship for all ages. We offer programming for specific ages—from infant through elder—and we offer experiences of shared space and discovery.

Multigenerational Services

The worship team, which includes our minister and religious exploration director, is working to provide new, fresh, and entirely engaging multigenerational worship—or worship that entices and edifies each and every person in attendance, no matter their age. When we gather all together, all ages, we experience a connection that exemplifies all that is good about communities: we are witness to each other; we hear, see, hold, and support each other. As we explore how to best provide multigenerational worship, we will experiment with new forms of worship, new avenues toward connection and awareness. And, most probably, we raise a wondrous joyous noise in the process!

Multigenerational worship will happen periodically throughout the year. These special services may include: Ingathering Sunday, Harvest Communion, Winter Solstice, Christmas, Easter, Peace Jam, Religious Exploration Recognition, Flower Communion.

We will do our best to ensure our congregation is aware of when these special services will be held, so that everyone can attend!

Spirit Dancers

A new ministry was born at the UCC in 2009-2010: Dance Ministry. Led by Christine Little, the Spirit Dancers interpret familiar hymns with poetic movement. All ages are invited to join in this ministry. Christine will dance with interested people during second service Spirit Play two times a month. She will also work with the children and youth on interpreting our seven principles through movement. We welcome this wonderful opportunity to explore our spirituality in a new way.

Faith in Action

First Sundays at the UUCC are Faith-in-Action Sundays. During worship on these important days, our congregation hears a Time for All Ages that relates to a need within our community, small and large. We are then all called to meet a challenge that may range anywhere from offering smiles to people all week long to hosting a public supper throughout the year to raising money for disaster relief. As Unitarian Universalists we know it is not enough to say what you believe, you need to do something about it.

Volunteer Opportunities

There are a number of ways for each of you to volunteer in the RE program and help our children, youth, and adults on the journey to their own truth.

The Religious Exploration Committee of the UUCC

The Religious Exploration Committee meets once a month to support the DRE, discuss programs, activities, responsibilities and finances. The REC monitors the health and growth of the RE program. All are welcome to participate.

The Religious Exploration Program for Children and Youth

If you are interested in volunteering as a teacher or helper and have been attending church for at least a year, please contact the Director of Religious Exploration. All classes feature two adults, one as leader and one as a helper. Often youth also will serve as helpers. The DRE provides all materials needed, you provide the enthusiasm and guidance to help our children explore issues of ethics, belief, wonder, and love.

Young UU Worship Weavers

We would very much like to expand our worship experience by including our children, youth, and adults in providing worship. Would you like to share a story, meditation, prayer, music, or movement with our Young UU Worship? Would you like to experience the incredible unity of our beautiful service? Please contact the DRE and we'll discuss the possibilities.

Children and Youth musicians

Please consider sharing the beauty of your music with your fellow worshippers. Please contact the DRE if you would like to play for our services.

General Helping Hands

Throughout the church year we ask RE parents bring in cookies or muffins, or volunteer to help at special events, or play the piano, or substitute for an absent teacher. The needs we have are many and varied.

Youth Volunteers

We are very happy to have young people ages 14-18 volunteer as helpers in our classrooms. Please contact the DRE if you are interested in lending a hand. This is a great way to rack up community service hours for graduation!!

Safe Congregation Policies and Procedures

All members of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church carry a responsibility to provide a safe and caring community in which our children and youth and adults are respected, in which their self-worth is affirmed, and in which spiritual, social, and intellectual growth is encouraged.

We will achieve these goals through the implementation of “Toward a Safe Church and Safe Congregation” policies and procedures. A complete copy of this document is available from the church office.

Some important highlights are:

- Staff and volunteers working with children and youth will have attended the UUCC regularly for at least 12 months and will have been through the appropriate screening and training process.
- Two appropriately screened supervisors will be present at all times in the Nursery, Children and Youth Religious Exploration Classes and during any church-sponsored activity involving children and youth.
- No children will be dismissed from class without appropriate supervisory parent or guardian.
- Church functions providing childcare require at least two youth and one supervising adult.
- All furniture and equipment in the classrooms will be cleaned regularly and inspected for safety.

If it comes to the attention that any of the Safe Church and Congregation policies are not being complied with, please inform our Minister, DRE or a member of the Board of Trustees



Keep alert, stand firm in your faith;
Be courageous, be strong.
Let all that you do be done in love.

1 Corinthians 16, Singing the Living Tradition, 713