

The Nuts and Bolts of Religious Education:

**A Parent's Guide to the Religious Education Program at
the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation**

2007- 2008 Schedule and Information

Nuts and Bolts

Calendar and Class Schedule

There is Church School and nursery care on Sundays year round. During the summer, the church has one Sunday Service, and Sunday Summer Church School is multiage and covers a variety of topics and activities.

★ Age-specific classes run mid-September through early June. During the first service (9:15 A.M.), we offer nursery care, as well as classes for preschool, grades K-1, grades 2-3, and grades 4-5. The middle school group meets in the B & G Annex during the first service.

During the second service (11:00 A.M.) we offer nursery care, and YRUU (the senior high school group) meets Sunday evenings.

A calendar for the church year, including Church School events, is published in September and is updated as needed. Copies of the calendar are available from the church office.

Class Dismissal

Parents are welcome to attend classes with their children, escort them to their classes and return to the service once children are settled, or let teachers escort children to their classes. Classes end at 10:30am for first service. It can be distracting for the children to have interruptions as the end of class nears. If your children will need an early dismissal, please notify the Interim Religious Education Administrator before service on Sunday, so a quiet exit can be arranged for your children.

When classes are over, parents resume responsibility for their children. If your children join you during Coffee Hour, please note the requests of the Coffee Hour volunteers on pages 12-13. At 10:35 A.M., a teacher or adult helper will escort to the church foyer any students whose families have not picked them up.

Registration

All children attending OUUC's nursery, Church School, middle school group, or YRUU youth program for three or more Sundays must register. Registering your child ensures that:

- staff and volunteers can work with you to accommodate your child's needs and interests;
- Religious Education Committee members can notify you of opportunities and services;
- teachers and the Interim Religious Education Administrator can contact you and your child by mail and phone.

Fees

We view programming for children and youth as an integral and central part of our congregation's larger ministry. Thus, we do not charge tuition. Instead, we ask families to pledge generously to the whole church using the "Fair Share Guidelines For Giving." These guidelines are based on family income, and families pledge at one of three levels depending on their own private assessment of their circumstances and ability, as well as the amount that would fill their hearts with joy. Copies of the guidelines are available from the church office.

Not including staffing expenses and fieldtrips or special programs, the cost of Religious Education ministry per registered child, per year is around \$100. Many families choose to give a small donation as a voluntary "registration fee" to help offset this cost. Donations of an average of \$40 per child— from each family that is financially able to make such a donation— contribute to the health and well-being of our congregation and program. If you are able to donate, checks may be endorsed to "OUUC." Please include "RE Registration" on the memo line.

Visitors

Visitors are always welcome to attend Church School with the appropriate age group. If the visitor is not registered, teachers may ask for a parent or guardian to fill out a "guest card" with vital information about the child. If the child continues to take part in the class, we ask that the child is registered so that we can better minister to the family.

Special Needs

We welcome your family! We would like to support any special physical, medical, or educational needs your child may have. If your child has special needs, please inform the child's teachers and the Director of Religious Education, so that we can work as a team to develop ways to meet those needs. If your child receives special education services at school, we also appreciate the opportunity to coordinate our Sunday teaching strategies with those of the weekday program.

Our main building is fully handicapped-accessible. The B & G Annex is largely so, and we transport middle schoolers with mobility challenges to the Annex as needed. Please speak with the DRE before the service so that we can make the arrangements.



In Class

Student Responsibilities

Students contribute to the vitality and quality of the Church School experience by helping build an atmosphere of cooperation and community in the classes and all other RE activities. We ask students to take their class time seriously: to dive in, explore, and have fun, and to respect their own uniqueness and that of their peers and teachers. Students and teachers work together to develop a behavior covenant for their class. Students are responsible for conducting themselves respectfully, using behavior appropriate to a liberal religious site.

Field Trips

Many of our classes or youth groups can expect to make a field trip (or more!) during the year. Parents are needed to organize carpools, drive, help supervise children, and share the adventure. If you want your child to go on a field trip, please fill out a permission slip as soon as possible after the trip is announced. To enlist in helping with field trips, talk to your child's teacher or the Director of Religious Education. We require significant help from parents to make sure the field trips happen, so we are always grateful for your assistance.

Injuries

If your child is injured, you will be notified. In case of severe accident, we will notify you as soon as humanly possible, but may need to call an ambulance or otherwise seek emergency medical care. Please supply all the emergency information required on your registration form. Be sure to notify us if you change your child's medical insurance or physician.

Snacks

Each week, our children gather together for just one hour! Because we have such a short period of time to be together in this community, there are many competing ways to spend that time. Most classes do not routinely offer a snack, so please make sure your children are well-fed Sunday morning. We do try to keep some food on hand for children who are having a difficult time due to an empty stomach, but we can't guarantee the availability of these snacks. On occasion, some classes will engage in a group cooking project together. Please be sure to mark any food allergies or dietary restrictions your children have on your family's registration form.

Adult Helpers Required

Because we are a Cooperative Church School, registering your kids in our children's ministry means you also are committing to be an Adult Helper for at least a few class periods each year. The Interim Religious Education Administrator or Religious

Education Committee will randomly assign you to several dates throughout the year, and you will receive your schedule. If you can not help out on the day you are assigned, please use the class roster to switch dates with another parent/guardian. Without at least two adults in the classroom, we can not conduct class. We reserve the right to send the children back to the sanctuary with their parents if an Adult Helper has not shown.

Adult helpers experience the magic of children's spiritual exploration...in small doses!
Adult helpers are essential to our program's success.

Other Volunteer Opportunities

Ours is a Cooperative Church School, and we hope to have help from every household in the congregation with the many tasks that pull our growing program together each week. Special events throughout the year require volunteer commitments or they simply don't happen. Guest At Your Table, the Yule Play, and the Spring Egg Hunt are examples of wonderful traditions at the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation that require a lead or coordinating volunteer and several (or many) supports. Other volunteer opportunities range from teaching and substitute teaching to designing bulletin boards to serving on the RE committee.



Outside Class

Expect Mail and E-mail!

To maintain contact between teachers and students during the week, many curricula include or suggest letters or postcards to send to students. Such letters may hint at the focus for the upcoming Sunday class or may suggest activities or questions for families to consider before the class. This is also an excellent opportunity for parents to find out what goes on in Church School and to relate the topics of exploration to their own values and family traditions.

Parents also may receive weekly updates through email on Religious Education activities and opportunities for active involvement in the Religious Education ministry. If email does not work for you, please notify the Director of Religious Education so that you can be put on a paper mailing list for periodic updates.

Child Care for Church Events

Besides nursery care for both services, Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation can provide babysitting for most church functions as needed by families attending. Call the event organizer listed on publicity materials to arrange care for your children. This care is available for school-age children as well as infants and toddlers.



Classes and Curricula

Themes in OUUC Religious Education

Our mission is to provide the children and youth of this congregation the gifts of a Unitarian Universalist religious home, and a community in which awareness, tolerance, and personal growth in spirituality can be nurtured and developed according to each child's unique nature.

At OUUC, the children and youth ministry has the following four threads.

- ***Spiritual Development:*** The origin of the word “worship” in the old English “weortheskippen” is “to ascribe worth to something,” or “shape things of worth.” It has also been associated with the human sense of wonder and awe. When we come together in religious community, often we come together in large part out of response to what is most important in life, to that wonder and awe we feel, to the mysteries of life's experience, and to our own sense of connection or holy. In Religious Education, we might, for example, marvel together at a plant, feeling its tender roots and precious leaves, wondering together about the incredible way that plants...and animals...and people, all have physical designs that perfectly fulfill their purposes. We worship together. We bring our wondering questions and explore them in community.
- ***Religious Development:*** As Unitarian Universalists, we have a religious home and community in which awareness, tolerance, and personal growth in spirituality can be nurtured and developed according to each individual's unique nature. In Religious Education, we learn together about this distinctive religious heritage. Consistent with Unitarian Universalist understanding, we learn about our shared faith as a covenant rather than creed. We hear stories of Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists who came before us and offer us lessons from their lives. Together, we explore the diversity and wholeness of our Unitarian Universalist faith.
- ***Ethical Development:*** At best, our spiritual and religious experiences further our growth into our humanity, helping us become our most loving selves. Our moral and ethical character is shaped by this development, often igniting in us a passion for justice and the good of humanity, the earth, and all the interdependent web of existence. In Religious Education, the development of moral and ethical character is of utmost importance. For our youngest children, the foundation is set through

the child's development of a sense of self, being in touch with their own feelings, and having a sense of belonging in the community. As children grow older, they begin to empathize with others, explore concepts such as fairness, and eventually begin to look beyond themselves into their community and finally the larger world. We can help our children navigate these stages, nurturing their best selves, affirming our community values, and providing them with ways to practice living ethically.

- ***Faith Development:*** This thread of our children's ministry is inextricable from the other threads. Faith development is life's meaning making, a sense of purpose, and core values of life. It is the cumulating experience of ethical, religious, and spiritual development, but it also happens simultaneously. It is both the impetus for and the result of life's storytelling, and it is the reason that all of our children's programs have stories at their base. If we were to imagine faith development in a personified existence, it would be our grandmother/grandfather storyteller selves as the story of our lives unfold.

There are six themes that frequently arise in our curricula. They are Unitarian Universalist identity and history, our Christian and Jewish heritage, world religions, social/environmental connection, diversity, and personal values and spirituality. We use curricula from the Unitarian Universalist Association and other sources. Each curriculum is tailored to the developmental stages represented in the class for which it is used.

Ages and Class Assignments

The Religious Education Committee and the Interim Religious Education Administrator work hard to choose curricula and activities that are developmentally appropriate for each age range in the program. **Students whose ages are outside that range make an already challenging teaching situation substantially more difficult for students and adult volunteers. We ask, therefore, that children who attend elementary school be registered for the class corresponding to their grade in school.** For the 2007-2008 year, 6th graders will attend the Spirit of Adventure class with the 4th and 5th graders. If you have any questions about this, please contact the Interim Religious Education Administrator.

Nursery Care (Infant-Age 2 or 3)

Both Services

BEATRIX POTTER ROOM

We are an intergenerational community. Please note that children are welcomed in the sanctuary. If your child cries or you should choose to leave the sanctuary with your child for any other reason, an usher can make a chair available for you in the foyer, where you can listen to the sermon by remote speaker.

Some parents/guardians choose nursery care for their young children during church. For many of our children, the nursery is their first "face of church." During both services, we provide infant and toddler care, staffed primarily by paid youth aged 14-18 and one adult

volunteer. The small but bright Beatrix Potter Room provides a rocker, a changing area, toys, and books. A bathroom adjoins the nursery space. Extra diapers and wipes are usually available.

Parents are welcome to sit and rock, nurse, or play with their children in the nursery. The sermon can be heard over the remote speaker in the nursery, though it may be difficult to hear in this child-centered space. If parents choose to leave their children in the nursery, our nursery staff will work with you during all or part of the service to facilitate this separation in the best manner possible.

Children older than three should be in the appropriate Religious Education class or with a parent in the service. The nursery is too small for older children.

Preschool (Ages 2 or 3-5)

First Service, 9:15am

NORBERT CAPEK ROOM

Rapid social, muscular, and language development make for a wide range of maturity in this group. Short attention spans move the children's focus quickly from awareness and exploration of the physical world to playing with language and expression to testing possibilities for autonomy. We provide freedom to explore within clear limits, parallel play opportunities and materials, circle time, stories, hands-on materials, songs, and a variety of mediums with which to practice personal expression. Teachers provide the opportunity listen to group and private sharing. Like older children, preschoolers crave opportunities to share what is meaningful to them. They want to talk about the things they have been doing, the things they are wondering about, and the people they feel close to. They also want to have a sense of purpose in the community, and to feel like they belong.

With experience in preschool or childcare settings, some older toddlers are ready for the church school preschool. Many families begin this transition during the summer. A paid youth caregiver may be available to accompany these children in the preschool classroom during this transition. If this would be helpful to you, please speak with the Director of Religious Education.

Spirit Play

A Montessori-Based Program

In the preschool Spirit Play class, class topics are focused on helping the children explore feelings, relationships, nature, and holidays, as well as the children's own life experiences.

The great religious educator Sophia Lyon Fahs identified a number of germinal experiences essential to the young child's inner/spiritual development. These are:

- The great phenomena of nature: rain, snow, sunshine, wind;
- The challenge of the difference between animate and inanimate things;

- A child's first awareness of his or her own birth;
- First experiences with life passages, such as death (often this occurs first for children with the death of a pet or grandparent);
- First experiences with sickness and pain;
- Play with shadows;
- Being in community;
- Creating something...arts;
- Making choices and experiencing challenges.

We understand how collecting seeds, creating “junk collages,” making shadows on a screen...can be foundational religious experiences for children. Spirit Play is designed around such experiences.

As in Montessori, the two key elements in the program are the classroom environment and the teachers. These elements free the children to work at their own pace on their own issues after an initial lesson.

The morning “greeter” (adult helper) greets the children outside the classroom door and helps the children get ready to enter the classroom. The “Storyteller” (teacher) leads the circle in the story of the day, followed by a time of group wondering and sharing.

Children then choose their morning work. They may work on the story told to them during the circle, using the hands-on materials that the storyteller used to tell the story. They may work on a previous week's story. Or they may choose an art response work, a centering work (such as yoga cards or the sand garden), or another type of work such as dramatic play or music. The morning greeter is available for any child who needs assistance during this transition.

Children have a sense of place in the community and classroom, encouraged by their own care-taking. For example, a pitcher of water is available for thirsty children to practice pouring and caring for their bodies as they are thirsty. All children are asked to clean up their work as they go from one activity to the next. Spills and other messes are cleaned up primarily by the children, with adult assistance only as needed. And the children help with class activities such as gathering flowers for the altar, setting up the altar, and so forth. The children in this class take a lot of pride in their care-taking accomplishments, as children—especially preschoolers—very much want to be helpful and do activities of meaning.

Leave-taking at the end of class is a formal process of saying good-bye to the Storyteller when parents arrive and children are ready. The morning greeter watches for parent faces outside the classroom door at 10:30am, and dismisses each child by name. Before leaving, the child cleans up, says goodbye to the storyteller and morning greeter and gathers his or her work. Because this important sense of closure is often lost by chaotic parent pick-ups, we ask that parents wait outside of the classroom for their children. However, we encourage parents to check in with the teachers after all children have been dismissed.

Grades K-1

First Service, 9:15am

HENRY BERGH ROOM

Kindergartners and First Graders are exploring new experiences. They are beginning to see and understand others' points of view and are beginning cooperative activity. They need help in sharing and considering the feelings of their classmates. Their peers start to be important, but adults are still their primary source of support. The children can express their feelings, have a sense of humor, and are further developing independence in physical self. Muscle coordination is refining, and their energy level is high. They are able to differentiate between fantasy and reality and are also able to retell and create stories.

Kindergarten-first grade is a common period for children to develop their first images of the spirit of love and mystery that some people call God, as well as to begin trying on the religious ideas of the adults around them. Because of increased social contact, this can also be the age in which children have their first peer-to-peer religious discussions. They discover the likenesses and differences of the religious ideas of their own family and other families. They may also have their first experiences of playground proselytizing from other children. They need reassurance, language, and a sense of belonging from within their own traditions, and they also need acknowledgement by adults of theological diversity.

Spirit Play

A Montessori-Based Program

In the Kindergarten-First Grade Spirit Play class, class topics are focused on helping the children explore cooperative community, their own early religious ideas, religious language, and the church community. At this age, one of the most critical things we do is help children develop their religious language to aid them both in personal meaning making and in playground conversations. We also continue to focus on nature and holidays, as well as the children's own life experiences.

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Leave-taking at the end of class is a formal process of saying good-bye to the Storyteller when parents arrive and children are ready. The morning greeter watches for parent faces outside the classroom door at 10:30am, and dismisses each child by name. Before leaving, the child cleans up, says goodbye to the storyteller and morning greeter and gathers his or her work. Because this important sense of closure is often lost by chaotic parent pick-ups, we ask that parents wait outside of the classroom for their children. However, we encourage parents to check in with the teachers after all children have been dismissed.

Grades 2-3

First Service, 9:15am

SUSAN B. ANTHONY ROOM A

Children in this group want to "do well." Their language is developing rapidly, they are discovering a budding ability to use symbols and to comprehend simple abstractions, and they have developed a sense of time and history. Subdivisions of historical time have meaning for them when related to their present. They continue to be mostly concrete thinkers, and are apt to be rigid and moralistic. They like to talk about themselves, their families, and their possessions. They begin to grasp concepts key to religious inquiry, such as justice, peace, love, compassion, sympathy, brotherhood, integration, integrity, truth, and law. At this age, children begin to take on the stories, beliefs, moral rules, and observances of their religious community. At the same time, they may seek to reconcile theological diversity around them by developing an adamant sense about a particular religious subject. They will appear to have very strong opinions about ideas they are still just trying on, as it is more secure to attach to the ideas ferociously.

They are reaching out for new experiences. Playmates are vitally important. They are experimenting with evaluation and criticism of their world, questioning authority, and asking "why?" They enjoy opportunities for cooperation and artistic, written, and spoken expression, information to use in discussing and criticizing the contemporary world. Their interests are deep and wide-ranging but often short-lived. Most of all, they are

focused on having fun within the group setting, and enjoy all-class games and other activities that call on this element of communal life.

Spirit of Adventure

A Curriculum By Kate Tweedie Erslev

This is a fun curriculum designed to be anything but sedentary. Activities include dissecting a computer, building cantilevered architecture using graham crackers, interviewing a sports coach, cooking unusual foods, singing Jingle Bells in “dog” language, circus arts, an animal blessing, and a popcorn sale!

Children gain a sense of belonging within their church school class community, and along the way, explore some of life’s mysteries, practice taking care of others, celebrate holidays from a religious perspective, and learn historical stories from our faith tradition. They are given room to express religious ideas, and challenged by the opportunity to hear others who may or may not think alike.

Goals include:

- Explore the ways that good sportsmanship and teamwork offer important parallels to the Unitarian Universalist way of being in the world;
- Reinforce the value of taking care of others and keeping each other safe;
- Experience the significance of being kind and generous;
- Affirm the value of using reason and being curious;
- Explore the importance of being creative and trying new things;
- Examine the value of living simply and loving animals;
- Build leadership skills and responsibility in the congregational setting through special projects.

Grades 4-5 or 6

First Service

SUSAN B. ANTHONY ROOM B

Fourth and fifth graders still enjoy family activities and are usually cooperative. They often enjoy school and like to please parents and teachers. They are usually refining a sense of humor. They ask many questions, often unrelated to the topic. These kids are fun to be around, they respond well to a positive approach, are enthusiastic, eager, and energetic. They are also inquisitive and challenging.

4-5th graders begin to place more importance on experiences beyond the extended family. Children in this stage are often preparing to emerge into the stage in which authority rests not generally on parents and teachers, but rather more particularly on “those who count” (certain adults the children look up to, particular friends, etc.). Children at this age also begin to have a greater sense of self-authority, a blessing that may disappear for some time in middle school as the children rely most heavily on peer input.

4-5th graders are increasingly interested in abstractions, symbols, and myths. They can be

idealistic. They are often very interested in complex religious and moral concepts. They are keenly interested in opportunities to express their opinions.

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At the 4-5th grade level, this class focuses on opportunities for opinion-formation and expression, leadership development, and ethical expressions.



Middle School Group and YRUU Youth Group

We value the older youth within our congregation. They are invaluable resources to us, and they contribute to the vitality of our community. These new masters of abstract thought enjoy tackling problems of religion and of personal identity, especially with regard to gender roles and independence. They constantly grapple with the ambiguity of our culture’s view of adolescents, something which we as a community need to grapple with as well. They seek enfranchisement to make decisions and explore personal and social responsibility. We provide information about adult attitudes, values, sex roles, and vocations to give students sound bases to make their own choices. We give them opportunities to suffer the full consequences of irresponsibility with sympathy. We respect their autonomy while seeking to give them safe and helpful boundaries within which the groups function. Our group and activity leaders also help search for materials, listen to what students want to say, and do their best to withhold judgment long enough for students to arrive at their own conclusions.



Middle School Program

Our middle schoolers will meet at the B & G Annex during the first service. Moving away from the Church School classroom experiences of the earlier grades, students will pursue challenge activities meant to encourage teamwork and personal growth, will pursue one or more service projects, will raise funds for their annual weekend trip to another Unitarian Universalist church, and will set up the annual OUUC Church School Easter Egg Hunt.



YRUU Youth Group Activities

The high school group (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) meets Sundays at the B & G Annex on a schedule they determine at the beginning of the religious education year. Our high-school-age youth work with adult advisors to set the agenda for the year. A Youth-Adult Committee, composed of youth, advisors, parents, and other interested adults assists the group in achieving its goals.

Past years' activities have included district youth conferences, retreats, wacky sleepovers, group suppers, intense discussions of spiritual issues, sexuality awareness education, social justice action, video and game nights, and decorating and furnishing the YRUU room at the B & G Annex.

★ This year the youth will be exploring the possibility of a campout, participating in Yule Play preparation and Sunday School teaching around Yule Play themes, and other fun events! Youth are welcome to bring friends to YRUU activities.

All-Ages Summer Program

During the summer, OUUC offers a single worship service on Sunday mornings. Church School during summer begins in June and continues through August. This multiage program includes stories, craft activities, and reflection on Unitarian Universalist

principles. Each class is led by a volunteer, and volunteers are always welcome! Although the lessons are sometimes cumulative, they do not require steady attendance to be valuable. We encourage families to join us when they can during this busy season.

Cornerstone Religious Education Activities Besides Church School

In Our Tradition

The first 15 minutes of most Sunday services are intergenerational times. All ages sing a welcoming song, we hear words of welcome, and we recognize birthdays. In a segment called “In Our Tradition,” or “Story For All Ages,” the Director of Religious Education, the Minister, the Music Director, an adult volunteer, or a Church School class shares a story, a song, or an activity that encourages congregants of all ages to consider ways of expressing the Unitarian Universalist tradition in their everyday lives. Then the children are excused and walk out to their Sunday School classrooms.



Children’s Worship

★ On the first Sunday of each month, instead of spending the first 15 minutes of worship in the sanctuary, the children go directly to the Anthony Room for worship as a children’s community. During this worship service, the children sing songs, celebrate birthdays, light candles of joys and concerns, participate in meditations or visualizations, hear stories, and participate in experiential worship.

Adults are welcome but are asked to participate when they join us. Adults and children who attend the service are expected to participate in a manner appropriate for a liberal religious worship service. The worship services can take a variety of forms, ranging from more active services to quiet and meditative services. Participants usually sit on the floor in a circle, but may at times sit in chairs as we do in the service in the sanctuary. Those requiring special seating arrangements, including the availability of a chair at all times, are welcome to notify the Director Of Religious Education so arrangements can be made.



Intergenerational Services

At the start of the church year, on Christmas Eve, and at other times as the occasion arises, the entire congregation worships as a family. The RE and Worship Arts Committee (WAC) work with the minister to develop services that feature storytelling, singing, and sharing by participants. Often shorter than the usual Sunday service, the services are designed to give congregants of all ages a meaningful worship experience. Optional children's activities for young children are sometimes offered in the Anthony room, and nursery care is available as always.

Guest at Your Table

In November and December, the Social Justice Committee, the RE Committee, and a national organization called the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) cooperate to offer the *Guest at Your Table* program. During a Sunday service, each household receives a *Guest at Your Table* box. That Sunday, the classes often have a "Guest" lesson, focusing on the community-service heritage of UUism. Families are invited to put pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters into the boxes over the next few weeks. The filled boxes are collected on the first Sunday in January. Funds raised through this program support the UUSC's social justice and empowerment projects throughout the world.

The Yule Play

Each year, the Religious Education Program turns its focus to the production of a musical play. The current tradition is to have the play in winter, with a theme expressive of many of the concepts that guide winter traditions all over the world. Rehearsals for the play begin toward the middle of November, but preparations begin long before that: the play is often created entirely from scratch.

Each year, there's a different set of volunteers who write, create props and sets, and choreograph dancing and stage blocking. All children who wish to participate in the play are welcome, though most large roles are taken by middle schoolers.

The production requires parent support; even if you aren't building a costume, your children will need your help to practice their songs and to get to a dress rehearsal the day before the play.



Secret Buddies

In February, Secret Buddies pairs children preschool age through 5th grade with adults. Buddies' identities remain secret for a set of Sundays, during which time the children and adults exchange treats and hints about themselves. Adults often give trinkets like colored pens or crayons, Silly Putty, candy, flower seeds, or seashells, along with notes describing interests, experiences, characteristics, or hobbies. Children in return share stories, drawings, and letters about themselves and their interests and activities. Exchanges occur in a Secret Buddies post office near the back door of the church. Secret Buddies ends with a celebration, during which all secret identities are revealed.



Questions and Answers About Our Religious Education Program

What Will My Child Learn?

About God

Many people think that their lives are part of a much larger life force, which they call God. People the world over have different ideas of what God is like. In our RE program, we share many of these ideas with the children, and we encourage them to develop their own. Our children also learn that belief in God is *not* necessary to the living of a good and meaningful life.

About Jesus

Our children learn about Jesus's life and times and the impact of his ministry. They learn that Jesus was a loving teacher who helped people understand each other and be kind to one another. In following the ideals of love, peace, and forgiveness taught by Jesus, we make the world a better place to live in.

About the Bible

The Bible is a collection of books telling about the early days of the Jewish people, their ideas about God, the teachings of Jesus, and things that some of his followers said. Bible stories are used to teach parts of various lessons and to acquaint our children with their Jewish and Christian heritage.

About World Religions

The children in our church learn about the scriptures, deities, holy days, and customs of a variety of world religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam,

Taoism, and Native American religions. Through these studies, we hope to show our children that people take many spiritual paths to find meaning and that no *one* path works for everyone.

What Will My Child's Religious Identity Be?

We are a Unitarian Universalist congregation, and in Religious Education we identify ourselves as Unitarian Universalists. Our curricula are based on the Purposes and Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). The children learn about Unitarian Universalist history and about women and men who have exemplified these principles in their lives.



What Are My Responsibilities in My Child's Religious Education?

Attendance

We hope that you will make a sincere effort to bring your child to OUUC as often as possible. Children are more comfortable and get much more out of the program when they know what's going on from week to week. Regular attendance also facilitates friendships, which in turn help the children *want* to come on Sundays.

Keeping Informed

Parents who have registered their children will receive mailings telling them what's going on in class and what else is coming up in RE. If email does not work for you, notify the DRE so she can put you on a paper-mail list.

Starting sometime this fall, the DRE will begin posting potential questions each Sunday in each classroom for parents to ask their children after Sunday School. The questions are suggestions to help facilitate dialogue between parents and children about the material covered in Sunday School. This kind of dialogue helps children gain more from their experience, and it also will help the adult congregation, particularly parents, follow what is going on in Sunday School and how that fits with what is going on in our larger community.

Sharing Your Beliefs With Your Child

Religious education is only one hour a week. You are your child's primary religious educator. Ask other parents how they handle this challenging task. Let your child know your religious beliefs. And if you're not sure what they are, or you can't articulate them, consider taking an adult Religious Education course or doing some reading on your own. Share your "used-to-thinks" about God, prayer, heaven, and so on...and what your ideas are now. Let your child know why you chose this church and what it means to you. Talk about how you act on your beliefs about fairness, tolerance, caring for the earth, and other

ideals, and provide your child with opportunities to act on his or her beliefs.

Involvement in Church

Your active involvement demonstrates the church's importance to you and enhances your child's feeling of being part of the church community.

Involvement in Class

Parents are always welcome to stay for part or all of any class. While in class, unless the teacher directs otherwise, please assume primary responsibility for helping your child behave appropriately. You may want to attend class just to support your own child, or you may be there on your assigned day to serve the whole class as an Adult Helper.

Adult helpers in each class are essential to our program's success, especially in preschool through 5th grade, which is why we require all parents to participate as an Adult Helper several times throughout the year.

Picking Up Children

Teachers have chores after class: cleaning up, discussing the lesson with one another, preparing for the next lesson, and reporting to the DRE about their class. It will help them do better jobs as teachers if parents pick up their children from the classrooms as soon as possible (see "Class Dismissal," page 1).

We encourage children to attend Coffee Hour with their parents and to take advantage of this opportunity to get to know members of the community. Though often Coffee Hour is known as a time for adults to catch up with one another, it can also be an opportunity for adults-- both parents and non-parents-- to ask children about their interests and extra curricular activities, their Sunday School Adventures, and so on. If children would like hot chocolate or tea, the Coffee Hour volunteers have asked that adults pick these items up for their children, as the items can be very hot when they are first distributed. This also gives children a chance to find a place to stand or sit while they drink. Because we have a small space in which to have Coffee Hour, younger children or children with a lot of energy who wish to run around may prefer to stay with their teachers and Adult Helpers when possible or to play on the playground. If a teacher or Adult Helper is not available to supervise the playground, you will need to supervise your own children as needed.

Helping With Snack

As an Adult Helper, or at various times throughout the year, parents are also asked to provide snack for a class, or sometimes for the "emergency supply" snack cupboard.

The lists that follow are suggestions for appropriate snacks. Please try to provide something enjoyable and somewhat healthy, and be aware of what the dietary restrictions are in your child's class. In classes with younger children, be especially aware of choking hazards.

Potential snacks with good storage capability include:

Raisins and other dried fruit
Fruit Leather
Cheerios, Mini Shredded Wheat, or other cereals
Mini bagels
Pretzels
Various snack crackers
Graham Crackers
Flavored popcorn or rice cakes
Vanilla Wafers

Potential Snacks that are good for one Sunday at a time:

Baby Carrots
Celery Sticks
Sliced Apples
Apples or crackers with cheese
Smoothie-type drinks
Seasonal melon cubes or balls on a popsicle stick, grapes, and other fruit as in season

Good Beverages For Snack Time include:

Bottled, canned, and frozen juices: apple, grape, and orange
Water

Items that can go in the fridge or our cupboard for use over time include:

Peanut Butter
Honey
Jam
Cream cheese

Items that are placed in the fridge should be dated and labeled as an "R.E." item. Also, please be sure to let the DRE know when you donate an item to R.E.