

Unitarian Universalist Congregation



Religious Education Prospectus 2011 / 2012



Unitarian Universalist Congregation

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Director of Religious Education

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Welcome to Religious Education at UUC

My husband is a lifelong UU and I began attending UU services with him while we were dating. Having also grown up in a liberal religion (United Church of Christ), Unitarian Universalism felt very familiar to me. We were sporadic church-goers until the arrival of our son.

Like many others who come to a UU church for the first time, our child was the motivation behind finding a church home. We both wanted our son to grow up grounded in positive beliefs and values, learning tolerance, respect and kindness for others. We wanted him to have exposure to many religions, not just one dogma, and we wanted him to find a safe place where he would be able to explore and develop his own beliefs as he grew.

We found a home at the UU church near our house in Cincinnati, and church became a big part of our family life. When we moved to Blacksburg, we wanted to find that same type of home here, and we came to UUC.

The Religious Education (RE) program at UUC aims to teach tolerance, self-awareness, peaceful resolution of conflict, equality of the races and genders, freedom of thought, justice, life-long learning, and ecological stewardship of the Earth. We seek to model by example and deeds, instead of relying on indoctrination and creeds. We try to communicate a sense of our history and values as a religious way of life to be practiced.

You are your children's primary spiritual educators, but we are here to help your family as they learn and explore. We know that every child's religious journey will be different, and we are here to support that individual journey.

We also know that a church home is more than simply Sunday school classes, so we provide opportunities for families to socialize throughout the year. Children with friends at church will want to come to church. No one says that church can't be fun—at least no one says it at UUC! We hope your children ask to come to church and motivate you to involve yourself, as well.

~ Karen Hager, DRE



Stained Glass by Chris Burdette

The Seven UU Principles in Children's Language **Learn them by the colors in the rainbow—R.O.Y.G.B.I.V.**

Respect people

Offer fair and kind treatment to all people

Yearn to accept and learn about ourselves, others and the mystery of God

Grow by exploring what is right and true

Believe in our ideas and act upon them

Insist on a peaceful, fair and free world

Value our home, earth that we share with all living things

Registration

We ask that parents register each child who will be participating in the UUC RE Program. There is no fee for classes, but those who register their children or youth in our program are expected to contribute to UUC financially as they are able, and to volunteer with the RE program during the year.

Normally, children attend the class appropriate for their secular grade level. Preschool children must have had their third birthday by the first of September. The DRE, after consultation with the appropriate teachers, may approve exceptions to these placements.

Classes are offered during the service and are grouped as follows:
PreK (ages 3-4); grades K-1; grades 2-3; grades 4-5; and grades 6-7-8.
Students in grades 6-8 are also eligible to join the Middle School Youth Group.

Programs for Children and Youth

Nursery

Nursery care is offered for infants and toddlers who have not reached their third birthday by September 1st. Nursery involves play and storytelling in a warm, nurturing atmosphere. Our Nursery is supervised by experienced, paid caregivers.

Religious Education Classes

RE Classes are available for preschool through grade 8 students. See page 6 for a listing of current curricula.

Middle School Youth Group (MSYG)

MSYG is open to youth in grades 6-8. In MSYG, the emphasis is on fun, with social activities and social action projects that encourage bonding among participants. Guidance is provided by adult volunteers. MSYG meets two Friday evenings per month.

High School Youth Group

The Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) is for students in grades 9-12. The YRUU is a youth-directed group that meets on Sunday evenings to explore UU values in relation to topics that the youth find pertinent. Emphasis is on community building and service, leadership development, worship, fellowship, and social activities. Guidance is provided by adult advisors.

Teen Teacher Assistants

Youth in grades 9-12 are invited to join a religious education teaching team as an assistant in the classroom. Youth are welcomed as team members and are a tremendous asset to the program, as the young children look up to them as role models. The teens gain leadership skills while remaining active in the life of the congregation.

Schedule

Regular RE classes begin on Sunday, September 11, 2011 and end on Sunday, June 3, 2012. There will be no RE classes on Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas Day or New Year's Day.

Other RE Classes

Our Whole Lives (OWL)

OWL helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. It equips participants with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, OWL not only provides facts about anatomy and human development, but also helps participants clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.

UUC offers OWL classes for grades K-1, 4-5 and 8-9. This year, we will be offering middle school OWL to youth in grades 8 and 9. Most educators consider this to be the most important of the OWL classes, and we encourage you to enroll your child, if eligible.

OWL Schedule:

Winter 2012: OWL Grades 8-9

There will be a parent informational meeting held in fall 2011.

2012/2013: OWL for grades K-1 and 4-5 will return.

A commitment to attend all classes is required to participate in any OWL program.

Coming of Age

Coming of Age is a special program where 8th and 9th grade students pair with a mentor in the Congregation and prepare for the transition from childhood to adulthood. The program emphasizes self-awareness and confidence-building; service to our Congregation and to the community; and culminates with an affirmation ceremony.

Coming of Age alternates with middle school OWL each year and will not be held in 2011/2012. *Coming of Age* will return in 2012/2013.

The Goals of the RE Program at UUC

The goals of the RE program are:

- To encourage children in the development of their own UU identity
- To encourage spiritual growth
- To provide religious literacy
- To encourage a social conscience

There are five themes that are reflected within the RE curriculum:

- UU identity
- Jewish/Christian heritage
- Religions of the world
- Social responsibility
- Concepts of God

Each class level encompasses multiple themes within a given curriculum, building from year to year.

- Preschool children begin with a general introduction of the church community, encouraging comfort and security through stories, art, and play.
- K-1 children build upon the idea of a church home and began an introduction to UU rituals, as well as those from other religions.
- Gr. 2-3 expands their knowledge of UUism and our Judeo-Christian heritage, and are introduced to the concept of social responsibility.
- Gr. 4-5 delves more deeply into world religions, faith and spirituality.
- Gr. 6-8 seeks to help the middle-schooler define his/herself as a UU, using discussion, pop culture, and visits to other churches to help in the development of a personal, religious creed.

We aim to encourage our children and youth to be religiously literate and spiritually aware; to make life-affirming choices; to develop a sense of social responsibility; and to be prepared for life in a multi-faith, multi-cultural world.



Religious Education Curriculum – 2011/2012

PreK (ages 3 and 4)

Chalice Children (all year)

Based on the premise that children learn best through experience, this program helps nurture spiritual growth, creativity and a sense of community through imaginative activities and rituals such as rhymes and fingerplays. Classes introduce children to concepts such as birth and death, dreams and the natural world.

Grades K-1

Creating Home (fall)

This program helps children develop a sense of home that is grounded in faith. The class will discuss the purpose of having a home and the functions a home serves, for us as humans and for other animals. It introduces the concept of a "faith home" — our congregation — which shares some characteristics with a family home. Like a family home, a faith home offers its members certain joys, protections, and responsibilities.

Stories About God (spring)

This liberal and eclectic theology looks at God as the central symbol in a religious communication system. It is story-based and covers three themes: God is a oneness that can take many forms; God is love and worth that can take many forms; and God is mystery that can take many forms. It addresses the spiritual and theological needs of young children, allowing them a variety of experiences with the entity called God, and to explore the ultimate reality, values, and mystery about life.

Grades 2-3

Super Heroes – Bible People (fall)

The goals of this values-based curriculum are to introduce children to the stories of people from the Bible who have acted with courage and wisdom in their attempts to lead their lives fully and make the world a better place for others; to show how the lives of these people confirm the principles which we, as UUs, strive to promote; and to encourage the children to lead their own

Religious Education Curriculum – 2011/2012

lives fully, using their own positive "super powers" as they interact with the world around them, and growing both spiritually and ethically.

UU Super Heroes (spring)

This values-based UU identity curriculum encourages children to explore the lives of famous people who were Unitarians, Universalists or Unitarian Universalists. Each lesson of this curriculum explicitly incorporates one or more of the Unitarian Universalist Principles. This curriculum has lessons on the UU core values of letting your conscience be your guide, welcoming people of all abilities, and caring for the earth.

Grades 4-5

Holidays & Holy Days (all year)

This curriculum includes a whole year of celebrations. Holidays are the age-old vehicle of religious socialization, setting time aside to remember a great person or event, give thanks for life's bounty: harvest, safety, freedom, warmth, or invoke light and gladness for overcoming darkness and danger, death and drought. Festivities tell a story which children absorb through experiences far more than through words. The class will learn about and celebrate holidays and holy days of world religions throughout the year.

Grades 6-7-8

Popcorn Theology (fall)

Popcorn Theology takes the concept and popularity of movie night to explore issues of theology and ethics for UUs. Each class has a selected excerpt from a popular movie, such as *Forrest Gump* or *Field of Dreams*. The excerpt leads to a discussion and activities that explore theological and ethical issues faced by middle-schoolers and UUs.

The Gospel According to the Simpsons (spring)

This curriculum explores the religious themes prevalent in the popular animated comedy series. Each session will include a viewing of an episode prior to discussion of a relevant topic. Topics include prayer, morality, God, pluralism, the institutional church, hell and the devil, and the Bible.

Additional Information

Registration

Registration is required for every child, every year. Registration forms for new children are available in the RE office or in each classroom. Returning children will receive registration information prior to the fall semester via email. Online registration is also available on our website.

Sunday Mornings

On most Sundays, children begin in the Sanctuary with parents for the first 15 minutes of the service. After “A Story for All Ages”, the children and their teachers leave for their classrooms. RE classes last approximately one hour. Parents should pick up their children at the end of class time.

A Story for All Ages

A Story for All Ages occurs during the service while children are in the sanctuary. Children of all ages are invited to come to the front of the church to participate. A Story for All Ages generally carries the message of the service to the children in a language they can understand. We do this through children’s books, stories, etc.

Visitors

We welcome young guests in our religious education classes on Sunday mornings. We ask that a Visitor’s Form be completed by the adult responsible for the child. To enroll in the RE program, please fill out a Registration Form, obtainable from the DRE or RE teachers.

Attendance

It’s important to be as consistent as possible in attendance. Familiarity is basic to a sense of belonging and ownership. A child’s comfort level and relationship to the community is based on attendance.

Website & Listserv

Visit our website www.uucnr.org/re for current RE information. Check out our new *For Families* area, with fun games and activities in sync with our UU principles and values. Also, make sure you are signed up to receive our email reminders through our UUC_REparent Google group.

Additional Information

Offering

To promote the concept of giving, there will be a weekly children’s offering in RE classes. For this to be meaningful, we suggest the children bring an offering from their own resources, if possible. The offering is donated to a worthwhile charity, to be determined in fall.

Volunteering

Your volunteer time in the RE program is important. Our extensive program cannot operate without parent volunteers. There are a wide variety of volunteer activities to choose from. Parents who volunteer to serve as a RE or OWL teacher; RE committee member; or MSYG, YRUU, or COA advisor have fulfilled their volunteer commitment for the semester in its entirety.

Rituals

Provide continuity between your home and church by incorporating some of our rituals into your home life. Meal times and bed times are often ritual in nature. A chalice or sharing candle, grace or reflection could be helpful ways to foster a sense of spirituality and build a bridge between Sundays. Encourage participation in our UU traditions, such as the annual Water Ceremony and Flower Service.

Safety Policy

Our foremost concern is for the safety of our children. To that end, the REC, DRE, Minister, and UUC Board have worked together to develop the *Child Abuse Prevention Policy*. This policy appears in the *Unitarian Universalist Congregation Policy and Procedures Manual* and can be viewed in its entirety online. Per this policy, all volunteers involved in ongoing work with minors, such as teaching class or advising a youth group, are required to pass background and reference checks. The policy further states that two adult teachers be present in each classroom during regular RE classes.

Welcoming Congregation

UUC is officially recognized by the UUA as a *Welcoming Congregation*. We welcome participation by all kinds of families and recruit our RE teachers regardless of sexual orientation.

Get Involved

Family Activities and Events

- Advent Garden—Held the first Saturday in December, this annual event celebrates the beginning of the holiday season, where children light candles along a labyrinth path, while our choir sings beautiful holiday music.
- KidSpirit Parties—These family parties are held once a quarter and include a potluck, activities for the kids, and, often, a movie. This is a great way to meet other families at UUC!
- Family Circle Suppers—Join other families in host homes for a potluck supper. Another opportunity for families to meet and socialize.
- Ice Cream Social—Our end of year RE party, honoring our teachers and teen assistants.

Social Action Projects

- It's Scary to be Hungry—Food donations are solicited at a local Kroger store during October.
- Mitten Tree—The entire congregation brings mittens, hats, and scarves to decorate our Christmas tree. All items are donated to local agencies to help those less fortunate keep warm in cold weather.
- Project Linus—The church will participate in a blanket build to benefit kids and others in hospitals and homeless shelters.
- Easter Egg Hunt for HSMC—Our annual egg hunt goes to the dogs...literally! Congregants donate items to benefit the Humane Society of Montgomery County, then children hunt for those items on Easter morning. All the fun of an egg hunt in a social action project!
- Interfaith Food Pantry—Our weekly offering is for canned and non-perishable food to benefit the Interfaith Food Pantry.



Volunteer

- Teach RE, OWL, or a Summer RE class, or become a substitute teacher.
- Become an Advisor for MSYG, YRUU, or COA.
- Many other opportunities to volunteer for one-time activities, such as childcare for Teacher Appreciation Night, KidSpirit parties or other events, providing food, or assisting with intergenerational services.

Religious Education Staff

Karen Hager—Director of Religious Education (DRE)

Karen Hager grew up in O'Fallon, IL., and attended the United Church of Christ as a child. In her teenage years, her family moved to Cincinnati, OH., where she lived, until moving in 2009 to Blacksburg with her husband and son. She has a marketing degree from Miami University in Oxford, OH., and has over twenty years of experience in sales and marketing management.

Karen's husband, Monte, is a lifelong, fourth-generation, Unitarian, and introduced Karen to the UU Church while they were dating. Like many other families, their interest in finding and becoming active in a church home coincided with the arrival of their son, Ben. In Cincinnati, Karen and her family were active members of the Heritage Universalist Unitarian Church. The family began attending UUC when they moved to Blacksburg.

At Heritage, Karen was a member of the Religious Education Committee, co-taught during summer classes, and became an active proponent of UU education for children. She also served as chair of the Auction Committee and Communications Committee, and designed and maintained the church website. She received the Volunteer of the Year Award from Heritage in 2008.

Religious Education Committee (REC)

The REC is empowered by the Board to work with the DRE to provide a strong UU base and to nurture and support the diverse religious journeys of our children. The committee is responsible for children in the RE program, from Nursery through 8th grade.

There are two sub-committees that operate within the REC: Our Whole Lives (OWL); and Coming of Age (COA). A separate group, the Middle School Youth Group (MSYG), operates within the REC budget and is staffed by adult, background-checked, youth advisors. Each of the three groups has a liaison within REC.

Contact Information

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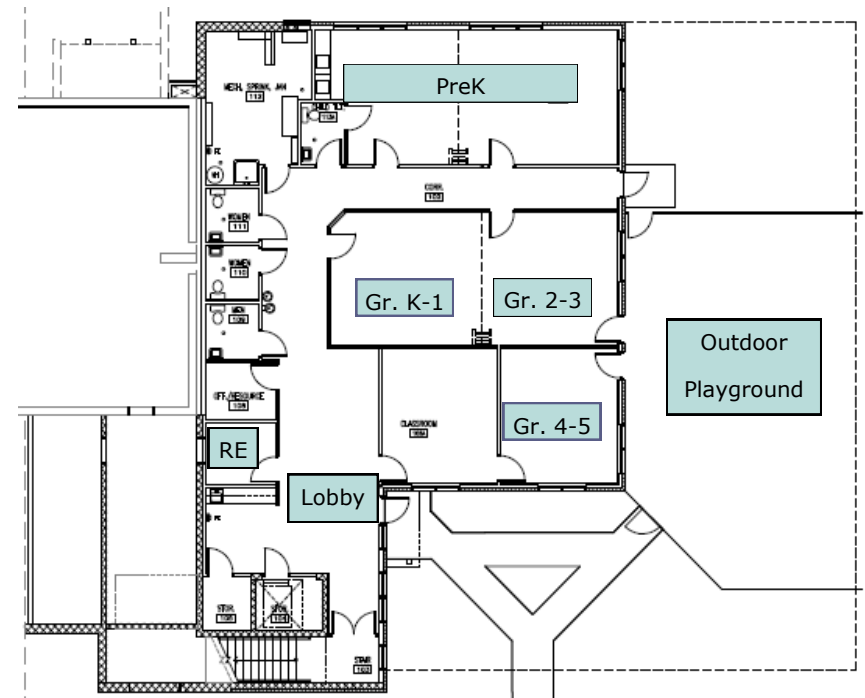
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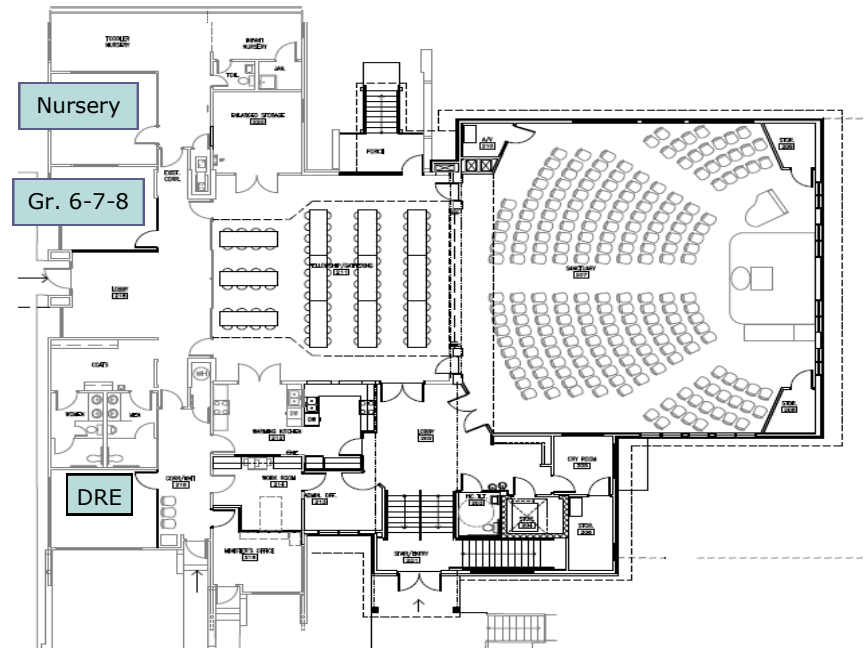
Minister Emerita

Rev. Christine Brownlie

Most communication between RE and parents is through the Google group set up for parents with children enrolled in RE. If you are not a member of the UUC_REparent Google group, contact the DRE to be added.



LOWER LEVEL FLOOR PLAN



MAIN LEVEL FLOOR PLAN