

Religious Education at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Reading

Programming for Children & Youth

September 10, 2017- June 17, 2018

Our Unitarian Universalist principles represent a model for an ethical, faith-filled, and compassionate life.



**Our Unitarian Universalist sources inspire us,
across time and tradition,
to be people of good faith and right action.**

Our Mission

Inspired by our Unitarian Universalist principles and sources, we seek to offer engaging and compelling religious education programming that integrates our Unitarian Universalist principles into critical thinking skill, empowering people of all ages to make choices for compassionate and ethical actions.

Our Themes

Children’s programming rotates on a three-year cycle for elementary grades. Pillar themes include the study of our Judeo-Christian heritage, Unitarian Universalist History & Identity and the Study of Justice in systems and relationships. Adolescents and teens are offered classes that include the study of World Religions and our milestone ‘Coming of Age’ program. Adults focus on education that deepens our spirituality & connections to one another through study, spiritual practice and through outreach to friends and neighbors, locally and globally.

Our Vision

Acknowledging that faith development is an unfolding, lifelong process, we continually review and assess our opportunities to provide engaging, transformative experiences for learners of all ages. We acknowledge that the thriving church of the 21st century is attentive and responsive to contemporary needs of its members, offering programming that enriches and supports all members of our congregation.

Religious Education Staff and Leadership

Religious Education at UUCR is affirmed and supported by all members of the church staff team.

Reverend Hank Peirce: Reverend Hank is Minister to church families and members of all ages. He actively supports both the mission of RE, and the unfolding spiritual paths of our children and you- both in spirit and with his presence.

Sally Liebermann, Director of Lifespan Religious Education: Sally is responsible for leading religious education activities for children and youth, nursery through grade 12. She works collaboratively with Reverend Hank to ensure that all of our children and youth are blessed with the grace and love of Unitarian Universalism .

Liz Weber, Ministerial Intern (2016-2018): Liz provides ministerial presence and structural supports to our Youth Groups throughout the year, providing pastoral care to teens and assisting staff and volunteer leaders in their development as leaders in Unitarian Universalism. Liz will guide SHYP youth through the process of creating and leading a Sunday morning worship service for the congregation.

The Religious Education Committee: This dedicated group works creatively with staff and lay leaders, enthusiastically supporting the mission of Religious Education at UUCR- *'to offer engaging and compelling religious education programming for all ages that will instill and support our Unitarian Universalist principles and sources'*. Many are present on Sundays to assist staff and ensure that all programming for children and youth is safe, staffed and accessible. They actively recruit classroom volunteers and act as 'Liaisons' to provide ongoing communication and support to volunteers and families.

Serving on the RE Committee this year are church members:

Theo Noell, Chair, 2017-2018 and Liaison to Grades 3 & 4

Lynne Champion, Data Administrator

Katie Wheeler, Liaison to Nursery/Playschool

Leslie Raymond, Liaison to Spirit Play

Melissa Plowman, Liaison to Grades 1 & 2

Katie Camire, Liaison to Grades 5 & 6

Robyn Matzke, Liaison to Grades 7 & 8 'Neighboring Faiths'

Religious Education on Sunday Mornings

Multigenerational Worship Services

Throughout the church year, children have several opportunities to attend Multigenerational Worship Services with their families and loved ones. Such services are crafted to engage friends of all ages and include moments of song, silence, prayer, movement and always the lighting of candles! There are busy boxes for children located at either entrance to our sanctuary and children are invited to bring quiet activities to their seats with their loved ones. Ours is a church family that welcomes and cherishes children-we understand wiggles and giggles- all are welcome here.

Multigenerational Worship Services planned for our upcoming church year include:

- **Sunday September 10, 2017 – Water Communion (Ingathering first Sunday of the church year)-all are invited to bring water symbolizing our summer journeys to share.**
- **Sunday November 19, 2017- Bread Communion (Sunday prior to Thanksgiving)-all are invited to bring a sample of family favorite or traditional bread to share.**
- **Sunday December 24, 2017-Christmas Eve Nativity Service, Christmas Eve Candlelight Service (holiday service times will be announced in September)**
- **Sunday January 14, 2018-Celebrating Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday**
- **Sunday April 1, 2018- Easter Sunday Worship**
- **Sunday June 17, 2018- Flower Communion (third Sunday in June)-all are invited to bring a flower from home (or from your walk into church!) to share.**





Sunday Mornings

On most Sundays of the church year, children begin worship in the sanctuary with their families/loved ones. They hear inspiring music from our musicians, choir and often guests. They hear our morning's welcoming words, our call to worship and witness the lighting of our chalice as they recite the affirmation that reminds us that we gather 'in the light of truth, the warmth of community and the fire of commitment'. They sing hymns and hear stories during 'A Time for All Ages' in different voices-sometimes told by our minister, our intern, our DLRE or members of our congregation before leaving with their leaders for classes. This time spent in church is a cherished component of the Sunday morning religious experience as children become familiar with friends & rituals and develop a true sense of belonging. Many families sign up to usher and support worship in fun and interactive ways and often children light the chalice or assist with 'Time for All Ages'.

Nursery Care (Infants & Toddlers)

Katie Wheeler, RE Committee Liaison



Childcare Professionals, Terry and Stacey Hill (mother-daughter teaching team) return to our Nursery for their 4th year!

We offer a fun and nurturing nursery/play space for babies and toddlers (to age 4) during both worship services (9:15am, 11:00am) or on 'Single Service Sundays' at 10:00am. Our Nursery is located in the Sawyer Nursery School, staffed by professional childcare providers Terry and Stacey Hill who are returning to their 4th year at UUCR! In the Nursery, our youngest friends enjoy free play, stories and guided activities. Each week, after children have had a chance to play, they gather in a circle to share their names and hear a story or play a game, as they will when they join classes for older children. As children become comfortable with Terry and Stacey and the nursery setting they also develop relationships with volunteers (both adult and youth) who work with them each week. Parents and adult caregivers are welcome to stay with children until they are comfortable and are always free to visit during worship. Children may be delivered to nursery ten minutes prior to the start of worship services during the months of September through June. (See our church calendar or announcements for worship schedule) We do require registration for our Nursery group for all children who attend regularly.

Classes for Elementary Grades

Religious Education classes are offered for children (Pre-K through 6th Grade) on most Sunday mornings of the church year. All RE programming is offered during our first worship service (9:15am) or on One Service Sundays at 10:00am beginning on Sunday September 17th, 2017. This year's theme will focus on 'Unitarian Universalist Identity'. Classes are differentiated by age and classrooms are staffed with volunteer teaching teams that include parents/guardians and other church members.

Classes-by Grade & Curricula

Pre-K- Kindergarten

Leslie Raymond, RE Committee Liaison

'Spirit Play' -A Unitarian Universalist Adaptation of Jerome Berryman's Godly Play co-developed by Rev. Dr. Nita Penfold, Rev. Ralph Roberts and Beverly Leute Bruce

"Spirit Play is a way of thinking about religious education, and inviting children and adults into an exploration of their own needs and "existential" limits. It provides for the modeling of authentic religious questioning, the freedom to search for one's own meaning, and perhaps most importantly, is emotionally provocative."

Learn more about this program at <http://www.spirit-play.com>

Grades 1 & 2

Melissa Plowman, RE Committee Liaison

'Wonderful Welcome' written by Aisha Hauser and Susan Lawrence

"This program helps children understand and practice values central to Unitarian Universalism such as friendship, hospitality, and fairness. It offers children safe, positive and intentional ways to relate to one another, the people in their families, and the world around them as they investigate how they use gifts they can't see or touch to welcome others into their lives."

Learn more about this curriculum and see lesson plans here:

www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/welcome/introduction

'Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education for Grades K-1' author Barbara Sprung

At this grade/age level our O.W.L. program 'promotes dialogue between parent and child and supports parents in educating children about birth, babies, bodies and families'. All parents/guardians are included in a Parent Meeting/Orientation before the 8 sessions are offered to our Grades 1-2 class in late winter-early spring months.

O.W.L. classes are led by specially trained adults and support this congregation's commitment to providing ethically oriented, age-appropriate sexuality education to all of its youth.

Learn more about O.W.L. here: <http://www.uua.org/re/owl>

Grades 3 & 4

Theo Noelle, RE Committee Liaison

'UU Super Heroes' written by Gaia Brown

"The goal of this curriculum is to introduce children to stories of Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists who have acted with courage and wisdom in their attempts to live 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 Unitarian Universalists, strive to promote. This is "biography as theology"..."

Learn more about this curriculum here: <http://www.uucards.org/gaia.php>

Grades 5 & 6

Katie Camire, RE Committee Liaison

'Traditions With A Wink' written by Katie Tweedy Covey

This is a 'U.U. Identity Curriculum for Middle Schoolers' written by a Unitarian Universalist Religious Educator in response to what she experienced as an 'identity crisis' in UU youth who would return from visits to other religious settings with understanding of the foundations of other traditions, yet seemingly unable to articulate their own Unitarian Universalist identity. The curriculum is currently being updated-we will use the original version.

You can learn about the author here: <http://www.uure.com>

MULTIAGE ACTIVITY SUNDAYS

Sally Liebermann, Director of Lifespan RE

There are Sundays throughout the church year when children gather in blended age groups for guided, themed activities that include a worshipful component, reflection, spiritual practice and game or project. We invite church members and friends to bring spiritual practices and experiences to these Sundays. Junior & Senior Youth and Young Adults are always welcome to join us for MultiAge activities!

Multi-Age Sundays for 2017-2018:

Sunday October 8, 2017 Courage To Be Me! Honoring Ourselves and 'Coming out Sunday'

Sunday November 26, 2017 Winter Holiday Movie

Sunday February 18, 2018 Hospitality Sunday-prepare and serve Coffee Hour

Sunday May 13, 2018 Mother's Day Sister Walk for Peace (as friends walk with Louis D. Brown Peace Institute)

Sunday May 20, 2018 TBD

Sunday June 3, 2018 TBD

Sunday June 11, 2018 TBD

Programming for Junior and Senior Youth

Youth are valued and visible at UUCR. Teens deepen their connections with their peers here, partner with adults in living our mission, and participate as leaders in our congregation. Adult members and friends support youth in their gatherings and encourage congregational connections that draw on emerging skills, nurturing a developing identity with Unitarian Universalism. Youth often assist Sunday morning staff in our Nursery and are invited to assist in all classrooms and/or assume roles in worship. Senior youth are invited to join functioning committees of the church. All youth are warmly welcome to worship as worshippers on Sunday mornings!

UUCR offers Religious Education classes and Youth Groups on Sunday afternoons and evenings for teens in Grades 7-12. We refer to our 7th and 8th graders as 'Junior Youth' and refer to those in High School (grades 9-12) as our 'Senior Youth'. Classes and Youth Groups meet throughout the year in settings guided by adult volunteers, supported by UUCR staff members (our DLRE, our Minister and our Ministerial Intern).

Youth classes are content driven with lesson plans and learning goals. Youth Groups are more casual and offer youth an opportunity to participate in an intentional, covenantal group that meets regularly to deepen friendships, worship together, choose & study action issues and to work together for positive change in our church and in the community.



Classes and Youth Groups-by Grade

Grades 7 & 8

Robyn Matzke, RE Committee Liaison

'Building Bridges-a World Religions Program' author Mary K. Isaacs

"Building Bridges is a world religions program to deepen youth's understanding of the dynamic, fascinating, and varied world in which they live. It seeks to broaden their knowledge of humanity and embolden their spiritual search." This class meets on Sunday afternoon and evenings. There will be scheduled offsite visits to other houses of worship and religious settings.

Learn about 'Building Bridges' at <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges>

'Our Whole Lives' (Grades 7 and 8) NEXT offered in church year 2018-2019



O.W.L is a comprehensive sexuality education program offered to our 7th & 8th graders every other year. O.W.L. classes are led by specially trained adults and support this congregation's commitment to providing ethically oriented, age-appropriate sexuality education to all of its youth. Jointly published by the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and the United Church of Christ (UCC) "Our Whole Lives provides accurate, developmentally appropriate information about a range of topics, including relationships, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual health, and cultural influences on sexuality."

Other tiers of OWL programming are offered to children in grades 1-2 and 5-6 alternating years.

Learn more here: <http://www.uua.org/re/owl>

JUNIOR YOUTH GROUP-SOS (Sometimes on Sundays)

SOS meets on Sunday afternoon or evenings, approximately 6 times per year, when 'Building Bridges' is not in session. This Youth Group model offers our middle school teens opportunity to meet in a more casual setting to deepen friendships with their peers, create a group covenant, choose service projects and work and play together.

Grades 9 & 10

Sally Liebermann, DLRE

'Coming of Age'

This milestone program is offered to our 9th & 10 graders every other year. Using the C.O.A. Handbook for Congregations* adult leaders and UUCR staff guide teens to identify how their Unitarian Universalist values inform their lives & their choices. The program educates youth about what it means to be a member of a congregation, inviting and preparing them, for maturing roles and membership in the community. All participants are encouraged to create a 'Credo Statement' that is presented to families and to the congregation at a dedicated 'Coming of Age Worship Service' in the springtime. Youth meet with adult advisors, mentors and UUCR staff throughout the year. Most meetings are on Sunday afternoons or evenings.

Learn more about Coming of Age Handbook for Congregations (author Sarah Gibb Millspaugh) here: <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth>

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH GROUP-SHYP (Senior High Youth Program)

The Senior High Youth Group provides a safe and welcoming place for youth to have fun, deepen friendships, develop spiritual practice and serve neighbors both locally and globally. Early in the church year this group goes on retreat to craft their collective vision for SHYP's purpose and alignment with the mission of UUCR. In addition to other projects SHYP partners with the street ministry of CityReach Boston, participating in offsite learning and service to, and with, others. Each year SHYP youth offer a dedicated Worship Service to the congregation and are present in many other aspects of church life. Youth and adult advisors share leadership and roles that support the mission of SHYP. This group meets on Sunday afternoons and evenings throughout the church year.

