

Children's Religious Education

2007–2008

Our Ministry to Children and Youth

First Unitarian Congregation of Waterloo

Address until the end of November, 2007

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“We recognize children’s questions as their real childhood prayers – put into the language they know how to speak.”

~ Sophia Lyon Fahs

Our CRE Vision

We are a diverse community and we affirm to create a foundation for our children to explore life’s questions in a safe and nurturing environment, throughout their lives. We invite them to celebrate the sacred circle of life, the rhythms of nature and to dance through life’s joys and sorrows. Children are cherished individuals within our larger community. We promise to help them find confidence to discover their own paths.

Goals of our Children’s Religious Education

In our CRE ministry, we strive to:

1. Create an atmosphere where children and youth feel safe, welcome, connected, able to talk about important things in their lives; a place where they like to come
2. Encourage children and youth to learn more about themselves and to be continuous seekers with a sense of wonder
3. Teach children and youth about their congregation and their religion, Unitarian Universalism
4. Develop an appreciation for the diversity of people and religious beliefs in the world
5. Help children and youth become aware of the needs of others and the Earth, and of their power to create change.

What is Religious Education?

It is a spiritual unfolding in the context of:

Unitarian Universalist History and Ideas

We learn about how our religion began, and who our heroes and heroines have been. We explore what we believe and why, seeking knowledge and understanding of our sources. We ask how our religious values can help us every day.

World Religions

Our religious tradition is informed by many of the world’s religions. Learning about many spiritual paths supports our free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

Social Justice

Social justice and social action have long been important to UUs. We strive to build bridges with all people, and work to make the world a better place. In past years, our CRE community has given support to hungry and homeless people, to saving wilderness, to homeless animals, and to orphanages around the world. Please share your ideas for future initiatives.

Personal Growth

As we build self-esteem and commitment to community, we strengthen our ability to engage in healthy ways with one another, the world, and ourselves and to bring our Principles to life.

Religious Education is an experience of community, a nurturing of spirit, a promise of life long learning!

Parent Participation

Our time for Sunday religious education is brief. Here are some ways you can support our ministry:

- Please register your children so that we have up-to-date information for each child and you can receive timely notices of CRE news and events.
- Arrive on time and come to church regularly to cultivate your child's sense of belonging. The more often you are here, the better we get to know your child.
- Let children dress in play clothes for active participation.
- Follow the activities of your child's group. Talk with your child about what is happening on Sunday mornings. Talk with CRE leaders and attend special events with your child from time to time.
- Talk with your child about things that matter. Share your beliefs and values. Be a good listener for your children and let them know you accept their points of view as valid for them.
- Make Unitarian Universalism part of your everyday life. Make a special effort to attend congregational events. Spend time with other members outside of planned events. Create UU rituals at home.

“Religion...it is to love, it is to serve, it is to think, it is to be humble.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

You're a Star in Our CRE Universe!

Parent involvement is integral to our cooperative children's ministry. Whatever your schedule or talents, we have a place for you, as part of a teaching team, class assistant team, Words for all Ages team and on our CRE Committee. We welcome the energy and enthusiasm of occasional specialists who bring their unique talents to our children's activities, as well as the valuable support of special event planners and helpers.

Parent participation is crucial not only to the quality of our program but also to its very existence. Please feel free to contact our Director of Children's Religious Education or CRE Committee members and let them know how you would like to help!

***“The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp
our minds upon the young but to stir up their own;***

***Not to make them see with our eyes,
but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;***

***Not to give them a definite amount of knowledge,
but to inspire a fervent love of truth;***

***Not to form an outward regularity,
but to touch inward springs.”***

~ William Ellery Channing

CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION GROUPS

“In dealing with my child, my Latin and Greek, my accomplishments and my money stead me nothing; but as much soul as I have avails.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Nursery

We are planning a nursery at our new location for parents who would like to see and hear the service while attending to the needs of their children who are too restless to stay in the sanctuary. Watch for upcoming details in *The Window*.

Rainbow Children ~ **Toddlers to Three Year Olds** (those born in 2004 to 2006)

Little people meet in a colourful room with blocks, equipment for dramatic play and climbing, music, simple crafts with caring childcare workers. Our Rainbow Room is a happy and safe atmosphere for connecting and growth. Please note that 4 year olds are welcome to join the Rainbow Children or the Chalice Children as best suit their needs. The Rainbow Room opens on Sunday at 10:15 and closes at 12:15.

Chalice Children ~ **Four to Five Year Olds** (those born in 2002 and 2003)

Congregation of Kids ~ **Six to Seven Year Olds** (those born in 2000 and 2001)

Explorers ~ **Eight to Nine Year Olds** (those born in 1998 and 1999)

These classes are provided an experience of small group ministry and inclusion in our larger community for children and their leaders. The children participate in theme-based curriculum activities through a rational model, which honours varied styles of learning and offers opportunities for worship, play, creative growth, outdoor adventure, and appreciation for the spiritual, in ourselves and the world, around us. The children begin their Sundays upstairs with the greater community and are invited to come up to enjoy the Words for All Ages. After the Words for All Ages the children are lead to their classes for their own Chalice Lighting, Glads and Sads and class activities. Parents are asked to come and meet their children and oversee their activities following the end of service to relieve our volunteer teachers and assistants.

Junior Youth ~ **Ten and Eleven Year Olds** (those born in 1996 and 1997)

A new addition to our CRE programs, our junior youth bridge the transition from curriculum driven programming to Youth Driven Partnered Leadership Community Building, Social Action and Environmental Stewardship Projects. The children begin their Sundays upstairs with the greater community and are invited to come up to enjoy the Words for All Ages. After the Words for All Ages the children are lead to their classes for their own Chalice Lighting, Glads and Sads and class activities. Parents are asked to come and meet their children and oversee their activities following the end of service to relive our volunteer teachers and assistants.

The UU Whatever's ~ **The Teens** (those born 1995 and earlier)

This youth group works with adult advisors to plan programs which include personal sharing, discussion of religious and ethical issues, guest speakers from other religions and from the community, service projects, participation in district youth conferences, and worship. The youth begin their Sundays upstairs with the greater community. After the Words for All Ages the youth are asked to lead the younger children to the CRE classrooms.

The Story of the Flaming Chalice

The flaming chalice has become the symbol of our faith. A chalice is a sort of fancy cup, and it is an ancient Greek symbol for wisdom and good fortune. The original chalice symbol was designed by an Austrian refugee, Hans Deutsch, during World War II. Hans had fled Nazi Germany and was working with the Unitarian Service Committee to help refugees find food, shelter, clothing, and medical assistance. The committee asked him to design a symbol that would be recognized as a sign of help available to people based on their *need* and not on their religion or race. He came up with the flaming chalice inside a circle. The flame symbolized the light of mercy and hope, and the circle meant all were included. We now look to the flaming chalice as a symbol of the light of mercy, hope, love, truth, and freedom for all.

***“All that quickens sympathetic imagining,
that awakens sensitivity to others’ feelings;***

***All that enriches and enlarges understanding
of the world;***

***All that strengthens courage,
that adds love of living;***

***All that leads to developing skills needed
for democratic participation;***

***All these put together are the curriculum
through which children learn.”***

~ Sophia Lyon Fahs

Keeping in Touch

Check out our bulletin board downstairs, our article in our congregation newsletter *The Window*, items posted on the congregation website and weekly service announcements and emails.

Children’s Religious Education Committee

Margaret Insley, chair
Sky Dasey
Janet Douma
Dianne Heise Bennett
Janet McPharlin
Jen Whalen

Acting Director of Children’s Religious Education:

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Our Principles

We, the member congregations of the Canadian Unitarian Council, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Helping Children Learn our Principles!

Here is a simpler children's version of our seven Unitarian Universalist Principles. Notice that the first letter of each principle is also the first letter of its corresponding rainbow colour....

1. **R**espect the importance and value of all beings
2. **O**ffer fair and kind treatment to all
3. **Y**earn to learn and grow throughout life
4. **G**row by exploring ideas and values together
5. **B**elieve in your ideas and act on them
6. **I**nsist on peace, freedom and justice for all
7. **V**alue our interdependence with nature

~ Elizabeth Katzman and Meg Riley, 1993

Our Sources

The living tradition, which we share, draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil and justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbours as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science; and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centred traditions, which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism, which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

101 WAYS TO PRAISE A CHILD

Wow • Way To Go • You're Special • Outstanding • Excellent • Great • Good • Neat • WELL DONE • Remarkable • I Knew You Could Do It • I'm Proud Of You • Fantastic • Superstar • Nice Work • Looking Good • You're On Top Of It • Beautiful • Now You Are Flying • You're Catching On • Now You've Got It • You're Incredible • Bravo • You're Fantastic • Hurray For You • You're On Target • You're On Your Way • How Nice • How Smart • GOOD JOB • That's Incredible • Hot Dog • Dynamite • You're Beautiful • You're Unique • Nothing Can Stop You Now • Good For You • I Like You • You're A Winner • Remarkable Job • Beautiful Work • Spectacular • You're Spectacular • You're Darling • You're Precious • Great Discovery • You've Discovered The Secret • You Figured It Out • Fantastic Job • Hip, Hip, Hurray • You Are A Thoughtful Person • Bingo • Magnificent • Amazing • You're Awesome • Marvelous • Terrific • You're Important • Phenomenal • You're Sensational • Way To Consider Others • Super Work • Creative Job • Super Job • Fantastic Job • Exceptional Performance • You're A Real Trooper • You Are Responsible • You Are Exciting • You Learned It Right • What An Imagination • What A Good Listener • You Are Fun • You're Growing Up • You Tried Hard • You Care • Beautiful Sharing • Great Team Work • Outstanding Performance • You're A Good Friend • I Trust You • You're Important • You Mean A Lot To Me • You Make Me Happy • You Belong • You've Got A Friend • You Make Me Laugh • You Brighten My Day • I Respect You • You Mean The World To Me • That's Correct • You're A Joy • You're A-OK • My Buddy • You Made My Day • That's The Best • You Are A Shining Star • A Big Hug • A Big Kiss • Say I Love You • Remember, a smile is worth 1,000 words!