

# OUUC Parent's Guide to Programs for Children and Youth



Your Child is Welcome Here

**2015-2016**

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## Welcome ... or Welcome Back!

I'm thrilled to be planning my 8<sup>th</sup> year in Religious Education at OUUC. It is truly a pleasure and a privilege to work with the amazing families, children, and youth here. This year we will carry on many of our favorite programs, **all at the 11:00 service**.

It's going to be a great year. Register early so we can better plan and organize it!

Feel free to contact me at [dre@ouuc.org](mailto:dre@ouuc.org) or 360-786-6383

In peace, Sara Lewis

## Commonly Used Abbreviations and Acronyms

Wondering what we're talking about? Although we try not to, we do tend to fall into the use of short-hand when we talk about the program – abbreviations and acronyms just slip in. Here are the common ones:

OUUC = Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation

DRE = Director of Religious Education

RE = Religious Education

UU = Unitarian Universalist

UUA = Unitarian Universalist Association

FMT = Family Ministry Team

OWL = Our Whole Lives (a series of age-appropriate sexuality education curricula)

## **OUUC Philosophy of Religious Education**

—As Unitarian Universalists, we believe that the central religious act is to freely choose what to think and believe, and that this is best done in a loving community. The Religious Education Program is designed to give children and youth the tools and education they need to make their choices, make spiritual connections, build a community, and enrich our world. We seek to create a safe and loving community that appreciates diversity and is a place to have deep conversations in a culture of open hearts and minds. Our program is organized around three goals:

1. Have an understanding of what it is to be a Unitarian Universalist, with the values expressed in the 7 Principles, UU History, and a UU Identity.
2. Acquire Religious Literacy about the world's religions.
3. Develop the knowledge, skills, and awareness needed to live in a loving community (such as responsibility, decision-making, or anti-bias awareness)

## **Anti-Bias Education**

A Beloved Community is an integrated community, with all seen as inter-related and interdependent. It is a concept dating from the work of Martin Luther King, Jr., who saw that the Beloved Community would honor all as brothers and sisters.

At OUUC we seek to create Beloved Community, where human diversity and inter-relatedness is celebrated and explored in a safe and loving environment.

Although never perfect, we seek to meet the goals of anti-bias education:

1. Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family-pride, and positive social identities
2. Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.
3. Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.
4. Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discrimination.

# Unitarian Universalism for Kids

This is the language that we use to learn the Unitarian Universalist 7 Principles, with the colors of the rainbow used as a memory aid:

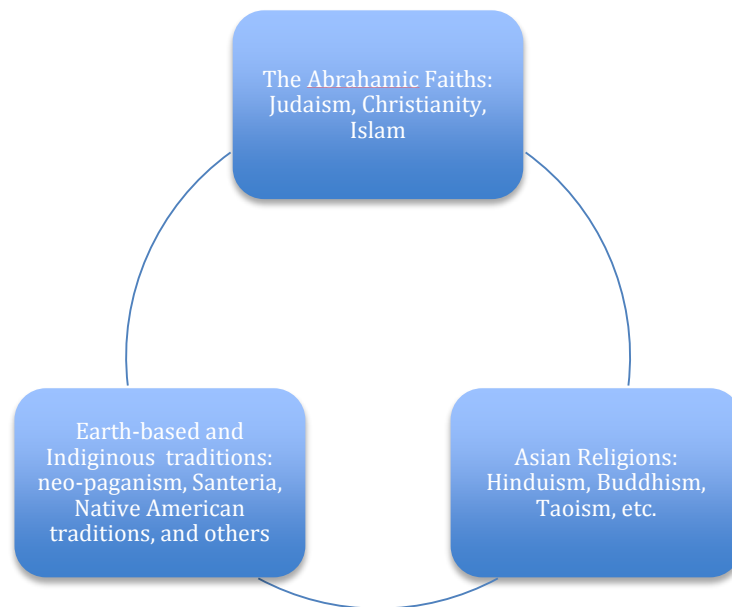
Red	Respect Everyone
Orange	Offer Fair and Kind Treatment
Yellow	Yearn to Learn
Green	Grow by Searching for What is Right and True
Blue	Believe in Your Ideas and Act on Them (and Listen to Others' Ideas)
Indigo	Insist on Peace and Justice in the World
Violet	Value the Web of Life

## This Year's Programs:

- Nursery Care (infants – 4 year olds)
- Spirit Play, a Montessori method program (Pre-K)
- Labyrinth Learning, a choice-based learning station program (1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Neighboring Faiths, a comparative religions program (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade)
- High School Group
- 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grade Our Whole Lives, a sexuality education program, Winter Session
- High School Our Whole Lives (Possible/TBD)

## Religious Literacy Rotation

Our Religious Education program seeks to provide children and youth with Religious Literacy – a basic knowledge and understanding of the world’s religions. This goal is so large and sprawling, however, that we have recognized we cannot explore all the religions every year. Instead, we have a three year rotation system in place, and **this year will focus on the Abrahamic Faiths.**



## Safe Congregation Policy

As Unitarian Universalists, we are committed to the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and to justice and compassion for all. This compels us to create a safe environment that protects children, youth, and adults from harm.

There is no perfect safety anywhere, but a church that is safe enough is a church where all ages can trust their surroundings (the people and the environment) enough to focus on higher spiritual goals, such as opening minds, filling hearts, and transforming lives.

OUUC is aware that abuse, harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence exist in our society. We have developed a policy to prevent abuse in our congregation and to protect our vulnerable members. Our policy creates an atmosphere where safety is the highest priority.

As part of this policy, we have a Safe Congregation Response Team, comprised of:

- Our Minister
- Our Director of Religious Education
- President of our Board of Trustees
- A congregant that has expertise in this topic
- Another lay member of the congregation

The team promotes a safe congregation and addresses the questions and concerns of the congregants.

How We Keep Our Congregation Safe:

- All volunteers who will work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be interviewed, must have been known to the congregation for at least 6 months, must pass a criminal background check, and will have references checked.
- We will have at least two adults present with children and youth whenever possible. When two adults cannot be present, we will still not have only one child or youth with one adult.
- Carpool plans will make sure that there are always more than one youth in a vehicle with an adult, and if possible, groups will travel in multi-vehicle caravans.
- Phone access to 911 will be available in the building.
- There are windows in all of the classroom doors that are left uncovered so that you can see in the classroom.
- Parents and guardians will get advance notice of activities.
- A written covenant will be developed in each class group, outlining an agreement between leaders and participants on behavior standards in the class.

Reporting Abuse or Harassment:

- Reporting abuse, harassment or sexual assault will be handled according to state and federal law and the provisions of the Safe Congregation Policy. If there is reasonable suspicion of abuse against a minor or vulnerable adult, law enforcement officials will be contacted.
- Please feel free to contact a member of the Safe Congregation Response Team with questions, concerns, or comments. The full text of the policy can also be found on the church website in the policy manual.
- To contact the DRE: [dre@ouuc.org](mailto:dre@ouuc.org)
- Other contact numbers can be requested from the church office, 360-786-6383

## Photo Use

Photos are frequently taken during Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregational events, and are used in brochures, blog posts, the congregation's website, facebook page, and slide shows at church. We never put names with pictures for minors.

Unless you contact our Director of Religious Education to put your child's name on the No Photo List, we may post your child's photo.

## Emergency (Small and Large) Procedures

### Illness:

- If your child become ill during religious education program activities, we will come and get you from the worship service to take your child home.
- If you will not be on the premises with your child or youth during an RE activity, you need to let us know that ahead of time and provide us with a cell phone number where you can be reached during the activity.
- We also need an emergency contact number for children and youth going on field trips.

### Accidents:

- In the event of a small accident during a Religious Education program activity, we will give you a copy of an accident report form explaining what happened.
- If your child needs medical attention, we will notify you immediately (see Illness).

### Fire and Earthquake:

- If the fire alarm goes off in church, or if there is an earthquake, we will evacuate the RE classrooms, keeping class groups together, and assemble in the North end of the parking lot near the shed and dumpsters.
- Parents/Guardians/Adults need to come and find the children and youth in their care, and sign them out from the teachers. We will not allow them to go looking for you or for their siblings.



## **Snacks, Dietary Needs, and Food Allergies**

Sharing food (breaking bread) together is an aspect of community that has brought people together for as long as there have been people. We see snacks at church as an important part of our religious community. Additionally – children and youth love to eat! And the classes are pushing up against lunch time – so folks are hungry!

We will be serving snacks in the RE Program. Please:

- Alert the DRE if your child has a food allergy
- Alert the DRE if your child has special dietary needs
- Bring a donation of non-perishable snacks to stock the RE Cupboard in the kitchen: (popcorn, rice cakes, juice boxes, dried fruit).

## **Welcoming Children with Special Needs**

At OUUC, we want to meet the needs of all our children, and are aware that many bring extra challenges with them. If we work together, facing challenges and celebrating unique selves can enrich the community and the learning for all the children.

As a volunteer-based program, we do not always have the staffing or ability to assist children one-on-one in class, but we are open to seeking additional volunteers to provide support to a family and would welcome a chance to talk to you in person about how we can best welcome your child into our community.

Please, contact the Director of Religious Education, Sara Lewis, who would love to talk to you!

## **Contacting the Director of Religious Education**

**360-786-6383**

[dre@ouuc.org](mailto:dre@ouuc.org)

Contact Sara Lewis, our Director of Religious Education when:

- You have questions or concerns about the RE program
- You want to get more involved at OUUC

- You are seeking resources (for example for talking to kids about death, grief, sex, God, or other concerns).
- You would like to meet and talk about difficulties you are experiencing in your life, and need a good listener.
- “Other”

Sara is planning on maintaining office hours this year Tues, Weds, and Thursdays 9:30-12:30, but her schedule is flexible and does vary. She is always available to you by appointment Tues-Sunday.