

UUCS Religious Exploration Children and Youth Volunteer Handbook and Safety Policies & Procedures



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem
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WELCOME

Dear Volunteer,

We are so glad that you have committed to serving in the Religious Exploration (RE) program for the children and youth of our community by joining our volunteer program. The children and youth need you. . . your time, your knowledge, your guidance and your care. Without you, there would not be a Religious Exploration program! The RE Staff and RE Team will work with you to make your volunteer experience a positive one.

This handbook covers many of the questions that volunteers often have; however, please feel free to contact me for any additional answers that you may need.

I look forward to this new program year and working with each one of you. Please know that your questions and suggestions about the Religious Exploration program are appreciated and will be treated with respect and sincere consideration.

Please read and keep this handbook available for your reference as you spend this year leading and caring for our children and/or youth!

Your time and talents are appreciated!

In Faith,

Christi

Christi J Olsen
Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem (UUCS)

Purpose of Religious Exploration for Children and Youth

Participation in religious exploration provides children and youth with a supportive community in which to grow their Unitarian Universalist identity. Our hope is that through regular participation in religious exploration activities, children and youth will enhance their ability to:

Experience a Sense of the Sacred

- Participate in ceremonies and rituals
- Practice various forms of prayer and meditation
- Share in stories, nature and music
- Belong to a supportive multigenerational community

Learn What It Means to Be a UU

- Study our Principles and Purposes
- Explore the sources of our faith
- Hear and retell stories of our religious heritage
- Participate in the activities of our congregation and denomination

Clarify Personal Religious Values

- Identify and internalizing core religious values
- Experience other faith traditions and how they may relate to ours
- Discern one's own religious/spiritual path
- Reconcile conflicting values and accept differences and mystery
- Develop personal spiritual practices

Express Religious Convictions Through Action

- Invest time and resources in our congregation
- Speak out about moral and social issues
- Participate in service projects and promote social justice
- Act compassionately and ethically

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Religious Exploration Volunteer Position Description

General Position Summary: Provides religious exploration instruction and/or assistance to children and youth on Sunday mornings. Our classes are geared to include a range of ages in age-specific classes and/or groups that include preschool through 12th grade.

Major Responsibilities:

- Attend UUCS Teacher Orientation every time you sign up to teach
- Understand and sign the Code of Ethics for Working with Children and Youth
- Attend Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect training held at UUCS
- Familiarize yourself with the curriculum and each Sunday's topic, as needed
- Arrive 10 minutes early to be sure to check-in and let DLRE know you are here
- Let DLRE know if you will not make it for your scheduled volunteer position
- Follow safety policies as outlined in the Religious Exploration Handbook & Safety Policies & procedures

Major Qualifications

- Enjoy children and youth and be able to interact in a positive way
- Are committed to Unitarian Universalism
- Have been a part of this or another UU Congregation for one year if leading or advising for fourth - twelfth grade
- Have a clear criminal background check

Work Conditions:

The Sunday morning Religious Exploration program begins at 9:30 a.m. and continues until 10:45 a.m. A fellowship time will be held 10:30-11:15. The second service begins at 11:15 and ends at 12:30. Summer programming runs 10:30-11:45 am.


An RE Staff or RE Team member will be available every Sunday morning to assist with any details that are needed to make it a successful time.

Lesson information will be available during the week before you lead a class. All lesson preparations are done for you and will be available in the classroom each Sunday.

Support for Teachers from Religious Exploration Staff and Team

While parents are a child's primary religious educator, formal religious instruction can be beneficial. Your role in the spiritual development of the child is an important ministry and can be life changing for the children/youth in your care. Please know that the RE Staff and RE Team are here to help you with this experience.

We would like your service to the RE program to be as meaningful and enjoyable as possible. Listed below are our contact information and the ways we provide support for each of you.

STAFF	TEACHER SUPPORT
<p>Christi J Olsen Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration Office Hours: by appointment Work Hours: Tues., Wed., Thurs p.m., Sunday (503) 510-8440 - Home/Work Cell (503) 364-0932 - UUCS, message Christi@uusalem.org</p> <p>Marnie Jeffers, Elsa McKinney, Elizabeth Bauman Religious Exploration Assistants (503) 364-0932 - UUCS</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offer Volunteer Orientation ▪ Offer on-going opportunities for spiritual enrichment ▪ Determine lesson plans and lesson schedules ▪ Prepare classroom materials ▪ Help volunteers find substitutes when volunteers are unable to ▪ Provide supplies, books and homelinks for each lesson as needed ▪ Contact volunteers regarding the week's lesson ▪ Keep the classrooms stocked with supplies ▪ Provide support for all OWL classes ▪ Develop Multigenerational Service opportunities ▪ Keep volunteers informed of Religious Exploration happenings

SAFETY FIRST

People who guide children in the Religious Exploration (RE) program serving children and youth are in a position of trust. You play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of the young people you serve. Therefore, it is especially important to be aware of the safety guidelines and policies to help insure their safety.

SAFETY GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

In the Case of Injuries:

Immediately ask classroom helper to locate RE Staff member or RE Team member to assist with the emergency/injury.

1. Assess the injuries immediately.
2. Check the area around the person for hazards and keep others away.
3. Assure the person that they will be getting help for the injury and help them to stay calm.
4. If the person is not conscious, is bleeding heavily, or exhibiting other emergency medical problems, send someone to call 911 immediately. If a cell phone is not readily available, phones are in the library and all staff offices, which are unlocked on Sunday mornings.
5. Send classroom helper to locate the parent/guardian of the injured person.

CARE:

- Keep person calm by remaining calm yourself; speak in a reassuring tone.
- Apply first aid as needed; treat minor injuries with the supplies in the first aid kit in the RE Kitchen.
- NEVER give out oral medication of any kind.
- If emergency personnel have been called, do what you can until they arrive.
- An AED is available in the foyer.

First-Aid:

Band-aids and minor medical supplies are located in the RE Kitchen. Look for Red Cross Symbol.

Notify the RE Staff or RE Team member of all incidents requiring first aid attention as close to the time of the event as possible so that parents can be notified. Please fill out an "Ouch Report" (found in your class attendance notebook) for all injuries and give to RE staff member. A copy of the report will be given to the parents and one will be kept on file in the RE Office.

In the Case of Suspected Child Abuse:

For the protection and safety of our young people and church community, volunteers agree to make RE staff aware of any type of suspected or observed abuse taking place within the RE program, including abuse between young people.

As a volunteer teacher in the RE program, you are a mandatory court reporter. As a reporter, it is your duty to call the child abuse hotline (1-855-503-7233) or 911 to report. Make the Director of RE aware of any reporting.

In the Case of Classroom Supervision:

Rule of Three:

As a volunteer, for the safety of the children and youth in your care as well as yourself, please remember the rule of three: Always have three people in your group. Do not be with one child alone. Always have another child or adult present.

If you are in a classroom and parents have picked up all but one child, please walk with this child to the RE Commons so that you are with staff and other volunteers.

Bodily Fluid Clean Up:

The RE Kitchen and nursery have a supply of rubber gloves. Always wear rubber gloves to clean up vomit, urine, blood or other bodily fluids. If possible, have the injured party (or their parent/guardian) clean up the bodily fluids. Advise RE staff that there has been a spill so that follow-up cleaning can be done as needed.

Children's Medical Issues and Allergies:

Children's medical issues are noted on their registration forms that their parents fill out. Each classroom notebook has a list of children's allergies and medical issues as they pertain to the RE program.

If you have a child that is visiting, please have them fill out the visitor form and ask the parent/guardian if there are any allergies or medical conditions that you should be aware of before they leave the child in your care. This form is available in the classroom binder or in the RE hallway in the forms rack.

Restroom Procedures:

Nursery & Preschool Children

- Toddlers and Preschoolers should use the restroom located between the nursery and preschool classrooms.
- Potty-trained children are encouraged to independently remove clothes. Volunteers are to assist (with the door open to classroom with other adult present) only if a child is not developmentally able to undress him/herself for restroom purposes.
- Children should enter the bathroom alone.
- If a child needs assistance with wiping, parents should make that known to the teachers, potty the child prior to class, and expect to be called out of the service to assist their child if a bathroom trip is needed during the class. Do not help a child with wiping.
- For non-potty trained children, get the parent/guardian to change diapers when needed. The classroom helper/assistant can get the RE staff or RE Team member to ask them to get the parent/guardian.

Elementary Age (Kindergarten - 5th Grade)

Children should use the hall bathrooms near the foyer. Children should be paired with another child, and the teacher may use his/her discretion as to whether an adult should accompany them. Children should not be sent to the restroom alone. Please be aware of the length of time the children have been gone and act accordingly.

- Adults or other children may not enter the stall with the child. If the child needs some kind of assistance with toileting, find the child's parent/guardian. Please ask the RE Staff or RE Team member for assistance in locating the parent/guardian.

Middle and High School

- Youth should use the g bathrooms in the foyer. Please be mindful of the amount of time that they have been gone. If over ten minutes, please have an adult volunteer check on the youth or alert RE Staff.

Arrival and Departure:

- We ask all visiting parents/guardians to walk with their child(ren) to the classroom the first few times they attend. Please ask them to fill out a visitor form before they return to the sanctuary.
- Please take time to get to know the parents/guardians of the children in your care.
- Children under 6th grade will only be released to their parents/guardians unless other arrangements in advance have been made with the teacher by the parents/guardians.
- Teachers may take a child to the sanctuary or fellowship hall to locate a parent/guardian, if all other children have been picked up.
- Junior and Senior Youth may be released to find their parents when the class time is finished.

Classroom Visitors and Classroom Helpers

In our classrooms we have an open-door policy; which means that we accept visitors in our program. However, because of our safety policies regarding background checks, only adults that are RE volunteers, can be left with a classroom of two or more students. Any visitor and/or parent may not be left alone with children at any time. All visitors must remain in the presence of a certified (?) volunteer.

Fire Safety

Fire Extinguishers:

There is a fire extinguisher in the RE Commons and a fire alarm in the RE Kitchen. Do not attempt to extinguish large fires. In case of a large fire call out "fire", pull the fire alarm, and evacuate your class from the building. UUCS has a building-wide fire alarm, but no sprinkler system.

Evacuation due to fire or fire drill:

1. Follow the fire evacuation map in each classroom to leave through the closest safest exit. Please have second volunteer stay behind and check closets, corners, bathrooms or other hiding spots in your areas to assure all children have exited.
2. Take your attendance sheet/class notebook with you.
3. Meet in the northwest corner of the parking lot (by the traffic light).
4. Take attendance to be sure that all of your children are there.
5. If a child is missing, tell the emergency personnel and RE Staff immediately.
6. Only release children to their parent/guardian or the RE Staff.

Guidelines for Social Media Communication with Children/Youth as a UUCS Volunteer:

We ask that you follow these guidelines, for your safety and the children/youth, if choosing to communicate with children and youth in the program as an UUCS volunteer. (Adapted from the UUA, Youth Inclusion and Safety Guidelines for Staff of the UUA)

Every year, social media, email and virtual communications are becoming more and more an integral part of the work of communicating about our program. Since there are a seemingly infinite number of platforms in use and they change so rapidly. However, it is important that UUCS Staff and volunteers who are interacting with children/youth (particularly youth) in your professional capacity, that we ensure that virtual communications follow the same general principles of the rules outlined in this handbook. It is best to avoid using social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, etc.) unless it is part of your volunteer job position.

Social Media Communication guidelines - if you are emailing a child/youth, always include the parent or guardian in the communication. If you need to text a child/youth, create a group text and include the parents. It is best on the text to write, please check your email so you have a record of the communication. If you are commenting on a youth's Facebook page or the like, be sure to friend the parent as well.

Groups and witnesses - it is always better to have multiple people (particularly another adult) present for virtual communications, to preserve a "group-appropriate standard" and to provide for corroboration should future questions arise.

Documentation - Written evidence or a recording of a communication offers proof should future questions arise.

Parental Permission - Parents or guardians of youth should be notified and consulted about communication expectations, such as Facebook, email or phone calls, and given the opportunity to limit their youth's participation if it is appropriate, particularly for youth under 18. Parents and guardians should also know who their youth is talking to or with and have the opportunity to meet these people (virtually or in person).

Rules for the Protection of Children, Youth and Adult Volunteers

Definitions:

Infants - Babies up to one year

Toddlers - Children 1 & 2 years old

Preschool - Children 3 & 4 years old

Children - Infants through 5th graders

Middle School - 6th - 8th graders

YRUU's - Young Religious Unitarian Universalists, grades 9 - 12.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Classroom Behavior Based on Our 7 Principles

Encouraging appropriate classroom behavior is an important part of a teacher's job. Children and youth can't learn in a chaotic environment. Along with encouragement to follow the *Family Covenant*, below are the behaviors we aspire to teach our children and youth when in religious education classes, participating in UUCS activities, and on UUCS property.

1. We believe that each and every person is important.

- Safety is our first concern! Use walking feet and indoor voices when inside.
- Children must remain in classrooms or supervised areas until picked up by parents/guardians.
- Only gentle play is appropriate on UUCS grounds.
- Treat everyone with respect. Use caring language and behavior.

2. We believe that all people should be treated fairly and kindly.

- Listen and follow directions.
- Be polite. Take turns.
- Care about one another.

3. We believe that we should accept one another and keep on learning together.

- Make a commitment to regular attendance. Your friends and teachers depend upon you.
- Include everyone in activities and planning.
- Friends are welcome. Let them know our rules.
- Participate with enthusiasm.

4. We believe that each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.

- Share your ideas and respect the ideas of others.

5. We believe that all persons should have the right to speak out and have a vote about what concerns them.

- Express your opinions constructively.
- Respect the decision of the group.

6. We believe in working for a peaceful, fair and free world.

- Ask for help when you need it.
- Do your best to get along with others and to be helpful.
- Be willing to listen to reminders about your behavior.
- Participate in church social action projects.

7. We believe in caring for our planet earth, the home we share with all living things.

- Take good care of our church. Help clean up.
- Be careful with our space, furniture and materials.
- Use only what you need. Recycle.
- Be gentle with the plants and animals.

This was developed at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, Texas, reprinted with permission from Andrea Lerner, Metro New York Religious Education Consultant, UUA.

Classroom Management Guidelines

Children and youth don't always behave in ways that support a respectful learning community. When a child or youth acts in ways counter to the behavior guidelines based on our 7 principles as listed above, teachers are to intervene to re-establish a climate for learning.

RE Staff are a resource for teachers when dealing with classroom management issues. We can offer support, talk with the children or youth, and/or speak to parents/guardians. Although our goal is to be inclusive of all, attending religious exploration classes is a privilege. Those who continually interfere with the learning of others and do not follow the requests of the teacher will have to have his/her parent/guardian attend class with them. If this does not change the behaviors, other arrangements will need to be made.

Children with special needs will be included in the classrooms, with a modified classroom behavior plan, as long as all participants are safe and able to learn.

Below are the levels of intervention teachers are asked to follow. Teachers may use their judgment as to when to proceed to the next level.

At the Beginning of the Year:

Establish a covenant for behavior among the children/youth in your classroom. Remind them that our first principle is all about respect. Ask them how we can show that respect to one another in the classroom. Let them generate the guidelines.

Continue to refer to the contents of the covenant as the year goes on. Please help the classroom share with visitors the covenant they created.

Handling Problems in Class:

Level One: *Speak to the Child/Children or Youth involved*

Address the problem behavior as it happens. Identify the problem behavior, remind them of the classroom covenant, re-direct the behavior. Please consider the

(Level One continued..)

developmental level of the child/children or youth involved when you are speaking with them and redirecting. It is important to keep the interactions as positive as possible. Most children are receptive to the intervention.

Level Two: Time Out

If a child or youth is continuing to disrupt the classroom, see if you can understand what is happening. Is the student more concerned with conversation with his/her neighbor? Is there an item in the room that is distracting the attention? Does the student seem to be excited about an upcoming event and just cannot attend to the lesson? Is the student someone that is always a disruption? Does the child/youth not feel well? Please take time to think beyond the disruptive behavior and see if you can possibly come up with a reason why the student may be causing an issue.

Please remember, often a student that is disruptive is not necessarily doing this out of vengeance towards the classroom, teacher or the program. Usually there is a very good explanation as to the reason. However, with that said, the student may not remain in the classroom and continue to create an environment that is not conducive to learning for the other children/youth. Please have the classroom helper get the RE Staff or RE Team member so that they can talk with the child/youth outside the classroom and the class can continue. The RE Staff or RE Team member will decide when the child/youth returns back to the class activity.

Level Three: Removal from Class

If a child or youth's disruptive behavior does not respond to the first two levels of intervention, then the RE Staff member will talk with the child/youth and the parent/guardian to create a satisfactory solution.

Possibilities would be to have the parent/guardian attend class with the child/youth. Often children/youth do not want to have this happen and will decide to stop the negative behaviors. Many children will not act negatively in a classroom setting with their parent present; however, if this is not an effective solution so that the student can continue to be a part of the program, the RE Staff person will develop an individual plan with the parent/guardian. In extreme circumstances, a child/youth will not be able to return to the classroom setting.

Tips on Classroom Management: Problem Behaviors

Overly-talkative:

- Wait a reasonable and respectful enough length of time for the child/youth to make his/her point and then start in quickly (often has to be over the top of their talking) thanking them for their comments and then continue with the lesson or direct the question to someone else.

Highly argumentative:

- Take the child/youth points into consideration and have a short respectful discussion about the arguments and/or concerns. If this does not stop the discussion argument, tell the child/youth that you would be glad to talk with him/her after the class. If the child/youth cannot get past the argument, ask him/her to write down the points (it can still continue in the child/youth's mind, but silently for the rest of you) and you will read them and talk with him/her after class.
- If this continues to be an issue, please bring it to the attention of the RE Staff so that it can be addressed with the student and the parent/guardian.

Quick to always have the answer before others:

- Allow student to answer and then ask what others think the answer could be.
- Acknowledge that you recognize that he/she has the answer, but be honest and tell him/her that you are going to let someone else have a chance to answer.
- Another method is to tell the ones that have the answers to tell it quietly into their hand and "put" the answer in their pocket and save it until everyone has the answer. This works well in many cases. It gets it out of their system and they are still able to "show" that they already have the answer.
- Let the child/youth know that you would like them to summarize the answers when all have had a chance to answer.
- Be sure the child understands that you appreciate his/her help.

Rambler: talks about everything except the subject; gets lost

- When the child stops for breath, thank him/her and acknowledge a comment made.
- Ask direct questions of others.

Side conversation during the lesson:

- Call the child by name, then draw her into the discussion by asking for her opinion.
- Politely stop what you are saying and ask if there was something that they had wanted to add to your discussion.

Poor voice or choice of words: voice not clear; can't find right words; child's idea may be good, but child can't convey it.

- Repeat child's idea in your own words, but say "Let me repeat that" rather than "What you mean is . . ."

Obstinate: won't budge; prejudiced; or may simply not see point.

- Try to get others to help the child see the point.
- If time is short, tell the child/youth that you would be happy to talk with them about it after class.

Griper: pet peeve; professional griper; or may have legitimate complaint.

- Address the concern and help the child/youth explain why things are being handled the way they are.
- Try and redirect attention to topic of discussion.

Personality clash: a clash between two or more members.

- Emphasize points of agreement as much as possible.
- Recognize the concerns and explain if necessary
- Redirect to the classroom discussion

Superior attitude:

- Explain to the child/youth that the class is a cooperative effort.
- Recognize the child/youth by telling him/her that you are impressed with their knowledge and you could even suggest a "side project" for him/her on the subject. Be sure to then let the class know that anyone is welcome to do a special project to share with the group.

Won't talk:

- Let the student be an observer. If pushed too much, could cause child/youth to shut down more.
- Without putting too much direct pressure on the child/youth, don't give up on ways to engage him/her. For example - when everyone is busy working on a project, walk around the table and individually try and engage the student in conversation.
- If a child/youth does not engage after attending fairly regularly, feel free to ask the parent/guardian about the behavior to get a better understanding about the child/youth.

Classroom Routine

Rituals and clear expectations provide a secure environment for children and youth. This becomes especially important when children are not able to attend regularly.

Congregational rituals often provide a sense of continuity and stability, helping children to reconnect after an absence. Below is the basic classroom routine.

Nursery:

- Please sign infant/toddler into the classroom book.
- Double check for allergies or special needs.
- Ask parents what child might need while with you. Suggest they might sit in the back of the sanctuary, if they are needed.
- Sleepy babies/toddlers may use the crib for their rest
- Children may play with the toys in the classroom
- Help keep the toys organized and picked up
- Any toys that were in mouths, return to the sink for washing
- Prepare children for parent's return when you hear service over on the monitor in the classroom.
- Follow the guidelines posted in the classroom

Preschool:

- Return from sanctuary to RE Commons for hymns
- Light chalice and recite opening words, collect offering
- Take attendance and record in classroom binder
- Check-in through games, short sharing time, etc.
- Introduce the day's activity.
- Students will do an activity that will be an arts & crafts activity.
- Children will explore the toys and leaders can ask wondering questions.
- If class is combined with older children, please sit closely with your preschool class and mentor them through the program as needed.

Wisdom of Wondering - K-3rd: (preschool is often included in this class)

- Ten minutes in sanctuary
- Children return from sanctuary to RE Commons
- Sing gathering hymns
- Participate in the offering
- Stay in the commons for the shared story/lesson offering
- Hear the explanation for the provided art activity to enhance the lesson.

- Children can choose the Spiritual Play classroom and art activity to begin.
- Children may explore any of the activities on the shelf
- Children may go from the Spiritual Play class to the activity.
- Volunteers will lead them in thinking about extensions from the lesson
- Children will clean up the area and make sure the classroom is clean
- Participate in a closing song/ritual
- Parents will pick-up children at the classroom door/or commons

UU Explorers (4th - 7th grade):

- Chalice lighting
- Check-in pertaining to an activity that relates to one of the principles
- Spiritual Practice - youth or advisor led
- Discussion/Activity based on the Soul Matters Theme Curriculum
- May be excused to find parents/guardians - 4th/5th graders check-in with parents to be sure they are fine with them being dismissed from class.

YRUU (8th - 12th grade):

- Chalice lighting
- Check-in pertaining to an activity that relates to one of the principles
- Spiritual Practice - youth or advisor led
- Discussion/Activity based on the Soul Matters Theme Curriculum or scheduled class activity (1st Sunday - UU Identity, 2nd Sunday - Soul Matters Service, 3rd Sunday Faith Exploration to other service, 4th Sunday - Social Justice Work)
- May be excused to find parents/guardians

Volunteer Follow-Up:

- Reflect on the lesson. Write down your comments and thoughts in the classroom log in the classroom notebook as needed or reflect in the class google group emails.
- Talk over with RE staff any questions, concerns or feedback, especially about classroom management issues.
- When there are dirty dishes, please return the dishes to the **main** kitchen to be washed.
- Please turn in any Visitor or Registration Forms to the Director's box in the workroom.
- Please help clean-up any activity from the day and be sure the floors are clean for meetings during the week.

Preparing Yourself to Volunteer

Part of what makes the teaching experience valuable for the students and for you is taking time to share with the class your life experiences. This can be done by connecting the curriculum to what is important in your life and by recounting the experiences and anecdotes from your life with the children and youth, keeping in mind appropriate sharing for the age you are teaching. As teachers, we should share the core values and stories in our lives and invite the children and youth to do the same.

This can be explained by this demonstration: A jar is first filled with big rocks and it looks like it is full and nothing else can fit. Then this same jar has smaller rocks added to it and they fit. At this point, the assumption is that the jar cannot fit anything else in it. Then sand is added and it fills in all of the extra space. Then when you think it has certainly been filled completely full - water can be added. Ask yourself if this demonstration could be done in any other order and still have the same outcome?

Though this demonstration can be used for other analogies, I would like you to think about the big rocks representing your core values. You must make room for the "big rocks" first or you will not have room for them after adding everything else. Organize your lives and your choices around your core values and everything else will fall in place.

Before teaching:

- Read through the entire lesson.
- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Where are the "big rocks" in this lesson for me?
 - How does what we are learning speak to my own life experience and our Unitarian Universalist values?
 - Do I have any brief stories or anecdotes I can share from my own life that exemplify the important points or core values in the lesson?
 - What wondering questions can I ask the children or youth that will help them become engaged and connect the lesson to their own lives?

Enjoy learning and sharing together to deepen the spiritual experience and enhance the teaching ministry.

HAPPY TEACHING!

IN THE NURSERY

Guidelines for Welcoming Parents and Children

Designate one caregiver to be the greeter for newcomers, one to play with the children as people come in.

The Greeter

- Welcome the parent/guardian and infant/toddler.
- If new to the nursery, have parent/guardian fill out a visitor's form and add the child's name to the attendance sheet in the classroom binder.
- Ask about any special needs, including allergies
- Shows parents/guardians where to put diaper bags and discuss toilet procedures:
If a child needs diaper changed, RE Staff will get you.
If toddler needs help with wiping in the bathroom, we will come and get you for help

Playing Caregiver

- Smiles
- Uses child's name (nametag supplies are in the cupboard if you wish to put a name tag on, please put on child's back)
- Asks what types of toys/books new child likes and offers suggestions
- Makes introductions to other children of similar age and interest

UUCS RE Nursery Readiness

Prior to children arriving each Sunday:

- Review attendance and allergy records
- Make sure room is clean, welcoming and well-stocked
- Turn on the music on the counter if desired
- Do a quick check of the toys to be sure all are appropriate and nothing has been inadvertently put away in the nursery and should not have been
- Review with other caregivers who will be in charge of what tasks

After children depart:

- Put toys and supplies away. Those toys needing cleaning should be put in the laundry bag in the cupboard. Wipe off table and counters.
- Take all used dishes, cups, and toys in laundry bag down to the main kitchen in the Fellowship Hall for washing.
- Turn in Visitor and Registration Forms in the DRE box in the workroom.

In Case of a Building Evacuation:

Please exit through the classroom door that takes you directly outside. If there are too many children to carry that cannot walk safely, please have children ride in the wagon (found outside the nursery door). Meet in the corner of the parking lot by the traffic signs.

Care Giving in the Nursery

The job of the nursery caregiver is to provide a safe and friendly environment for infants and toddlers while their parents/guardians are enjoying the adult service.

As parents/guardians and children arrive:

- Greet parents/guardians and children with a smile.
- Record their attendance on the attendance sheet. If new, ask parent or guardian to fill out a visitor sheet. Make sure you get allergy information.
- Discuss with parents/guardians how they want you to handle a distressed child. In general, our practice at UUCS is to try and comfort or distract a distressed child for up to 5-10 minutes depending on the severity of their discomfort, before asking a parent to return to the nursery.
- Engage children in an activity as parents/guardians depart. Taking them to show them something out the window is a great distraction. For example, say, "I think I just saw a bird out the window - did you?"

For Newcomers and/or New Parents/Guardians:

Sometimes new parents (new to the church and/or new to parenting) like to stay in the nursery. Caregivers then are an important bridge between the congregational community and new parents. Think about what it was like for you to be new to a congregation—or new to parenting or some other life changing activity—and be open to listening as well as sharing your experiences.

While our faith tradition is open and welcoming to a variety of thoughts and beliefs, please remember that newcomers may not have the same level of comfort expressing personal views that long time UUs may have. There are also some topics inappropriate for discussion when young children are present. Our principles are based on respect and acceptance so, whenever possible, we want to create a comfortable atmosphere, honoring each person's personal boundaries, parenting styles and life style choices.

The Family Covenant and Family Responsibilities:

We ask that the families read and agree to the Family Covenant and Family Responsibilities for the Religious Exploration Program.

In order to support the families in the program, please read and be familiar with both of these documents so that you are aware of the expectations of families in the program.

If parents have questions or concerns about the program, please be sure to refer them to the Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration. If parents are unable to stay and visit with the director, please take time to get their name and write down their contact information so that the director is able to attend to the concerns or questions as soon as possible.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem Family Responsibilities

Welcome to the Religious Exploration (RE) Ministry at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem. We hope all families who walk through our doors will find our congregation to be a place where they are nurtured spiritually, intellectually and emotionally.

Our Sunday morning programs for youth and children are organized and administrated by paid professional staff, but volunteers from within our Unitarian Universalist congregation are the ones who make our ministry happen. Our volunteers teach, mentor, chaperone social activities and offer their numerous talents in many wonderful ways. To ensure that all adults, children and youth are safe in our religious exploration ministry, the religious exploration staff complete background checks for our volunteers and offer training to all who interact regularly with the children and youth in our ministry. We do our best to make sure that two adult volunteers are present in all religious exploration classes on Sunday mornings and that everyone follows practices that allow for a safe and respectful environment. If you have questions about our practices, please do not hesitate to talk to the Director of Lifespan Religious Exploration.

If you should choose to enroll your child(ren) in our religious exploration programming, and fill out our registration form, we hope you will agree to accept the following responsibilities:

Encourage regular attendance in our Sunday morning program. We realize that there are occasions when families are unable to be at UUCS, but please attend as consistently as possible. Our experience is that children and youth feel greater ease, participate more readily and can build deeper community when they do so.

Make a financial contribution to the annual stewardship campaign. In most cases we do not charge any fees, rather we rely on your heartfelt pledge that provides funds to the Religious Education Committee operating budget. All gifts, no matter what size, are welcome.

Support the Religious Exploration Family Covenant. We ask that you review the covenant below with your family. We hope it will help you to know about the promises we make for how we will be together in this community.

Volunteer to help with the program – there are many opportunities. You are welcome to volunteer at any time in any area, but you will not be asked to lead an RE class until you have participated in a UU congregation for one year.

Please stay on the UUCS premises while your child(ren) are attending church school or inform RE Staff that you are designating another adult to be responsible for your child(ren) in your absence. Be sure to pick up your child(ren) under 6th grade from classes after the service so our volunteers know their students will be safe and supervised when church school ends.

Keep the RE Staff and appropriate RE volunteers informed of any allergies or medical conditions that your child(ren) may have, and update home and parental information regularly on our registration form.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem Family Covenant

As part of a religious community the promises we make to each other about how we will treat each other and what we will do to create a safe and sacred space is called a covenant. Our covenant is based on the Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

PRINCIPLE ONE: WE BELIEVE THAT EACH AND EVERY PERSON IS IMPORTANT. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect, to have a chance to share, to be heard and be included in the day's activities at church.

PRINCIPLE TWO: WE BELIEVE ALL PEOPLE SHOULD BE TREATED FAIRLY AND KINDLY. Everyone – no matter their age or sex, race, family, abilities, or differences is welcome. It means we take turns, share, and leave something for the next person. We speak up and get help when we see someone being treated unfairly or unkindly.

PRINCIPLE THREE: WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER AND KEEP ON LEARNING TOGETHER. This means we need to listen to each other, to participate in group activities to the best of our abilities, to help someone who is new or struggling, and to share what we are thinking or feeling.

PRINCIPLE FOUR: WE BELIEVE THAT EACH PERSON MUST BE FREE TO SEARCH FOR WHAT IS TRUE AND RIGHT IN LIFE. Everyone is encouraged to share their own thoughts and feelings. It means listening to others and asking questions to discover what is true and right for ourselves. It means that we will let other people do the same without judging or making fun.

PRINCIPLE FIVE: WE BELIEVE THAT ALL PERSONS SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO SPEAK OUT AND HAVE A VOTE ABOUT WHAT CONCERNS THEM. Everyone may share their thoughts and feelings about what happens at our congregation, and offer their ideas for new or better ways of doing things. It means all of us, young and old, need to listen to one another, ask for suggestions and advice and work together to make our congregation a safe and special place.

PRINCIPLE SIX: WE BELIEVE IN WORKING FOR A PEACEFUL, FAIR AND FREE WORLD. This means we settle our disagreements in honest, caring, peaceful ways. We use our words, not our hands. We participate in congregation social action projects to help others. We ask for help when we need it.

PRINCIPLE SEVEN: WE BELIEVE IN CARING FOR OUR PLANET EARTH, THE HOME WE SHARE WITH ALL LIVING THINGS. This means that we clean up our messes, don't waste food or supplies, and recycle whenever we can. It means we are gentle with our church, plants and animals.

RESPONSIBILITIES. We all make mistakes at times or fail to live up to the promises we have made to one another. At those times we will lovingly remind each other of our better selves, get the help we may need from someone we trust, and listen to one another. It may be helpful to apologize and make amends for what we have done. Despite these human shortfalls, we do believe that we all are behaving with good intentions to make our UU community the best it can be and we will be in relationship with one another accordingly.

***Modified from A Covenant for the Cooperative Church School of the UU Society of Wellesley Hills**