

# Visiting Boston with UU Teenagers

Organized trips to Boston are a tradition for youth groups in many of our congregations. While there are many other valuable destinations, the Boston area’s concentration of Unitarian Universalist points of interest makes it one of the top destinations for UU trips.

If a trip to Boston is in your youth group’s future, the following pages offer some valuable planning tips. Much of this information should also be helpful to *any* UUs visiting Boston, regardless of age or intent.

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## WHY PLAN A TRIP?

A youth group trip can be fun, help in building community, and be a great learning experience for all involved. A trip to Boston can help to make our liberal heritage a real part of the lives of our youth. They can visit the churches where important events occurred, see the public statues of our heroes, the graves of our forebears, and the office of our presidents. They can also meet the staff at the UUA, ask questions, and realize that real people are working on behalf of all of us to make Unitarian Universalism a force for good in our society today.

Tours and historical sites aren’t the only ways they’ll learn on the trip. Experiencing the excitement of new places, talking with friends, learning to respect the boundaries of others when all are tired and hungry, making decisions as a group, and figuring out how to handle yourself away from home are all valuable learning opportunities.

The table of contents above will bring you to a number of pages with information that should ease your trip planning. If you would like to schedule a tour of the UUA or a constituent meeting with a staff member from the UUA Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, please contact the UUA Information Assistant/Receptionist at (617) 948-4652, or [info@uua.org](mailto:info@uua.org).

## EARLY PLANNING:

### When do we want to go?

April and May are the perfect months to visit Boston. The weather is generally pleasant, the youth have a year of bonding and learning behind them, and you can work around spring vacations. However, because of their convenience, most groups come in these months, so make sure to schedule your tour of the UUA as soon as possible. (See the What to See and Do section below.)

We do not recommend visiting in June. Tours and constituent meetings may be more challenging to schedule during that time due to preparations for General Assembly.

April 19<sup>th</sup> (or the closest Monday) is a major Boston holiday in celebration of the beginning of the Revolutionary War, and many of the local communities have parades, battle re-enactments and other festivities. It is also the weekend of the Boston Marathon. All this activity brings hordes of tourists to the area, making it all the more important to make your arrangements early. The UUA is closed on this day. For other UUA holidays, please see <http://www.uua.org/aboutus/28734.shtml>.

### Transportation

How you get to the Boston area will depend on how much time and money you want to spend. Anything is possible. Groups arrive by plane, train, bus (both regularly scheduled and rented), van, and car. If you plan to visit sights in the South Shore, North Shore, or Lexington-Concord areas you will need a car or van. If you are staying at a suburban church, however, you may want to park your vehicles and ride the MBTA public transportation into town. Parking in the city is difficult and expensive, while the "T" will take you very close to most of Boston's highlights. For a map of the public transportation system, see [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com).

Other transportation links that might be helpful:

- Logan Airport: [www.massport.com/logan](http://www.massport.com/logan)
- Map sites for driving directions: [www.mapquest.com/directions](http://www.mapquest.com/directions), <http://maps.google.com/>, <http://maps.yahoo.com>. The UUA is at 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA, 01208. Be aware that 25 Beacon St. is at the corner of Joy and Beacon, about 100 yards southwest of where these maps indicate (To the **Left** of the Statehouse).

## UU PREPARATION: HISTORY AND ACTIVITIES

Youth get a lot more from their Boston visit if they have had an introduction to Unitarian Universalist history and if they have engaging UU activities when they are here. There are so many different ways to make UU history interesting and fun. Here is a list of some of the ways that trip leaders prepare and engage the youth:

Before coming to Boston:

- 1- Talk about UU Historic figures and watch movies that involve them. Examples: Louisa May Alcott and the movie *Little Women*. Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and *Glory*.
- 2- Host a UU Historic figure dinner party and have each youth present a short intro to their historic character.
- 3- After a few lessons on UU history, play a game show (Jeopardy or Family Feud style) with the youth to test their knowledge.
- 4- Read a famous Unitarian or Universalist author and then discuss the text and their role in UU history. Examples: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Louisa May Alcott, e. e. cummings, Charles Dickens.

Activities when in Boston:

- 1- Scavenger hunt of UU sites in Concord or Boston
- 2- Walking tour of UU Boston. There are two versions of this available, <http://www.pitt.edu/~jdl1/Walking-Tour-Boston.html> and [http://www.uua.org/documents/jaronskichristine/walking\\_tour\\_boston.pdf](http://www.uua.org/documents/jaronskichristine/walking_tour_boston.pdf).
- 3- Visit the Sargent House Museum in Gloucester, once home to Judith Sargent Murray, the wife of Universalist minister John Murray. [www.sargenthouse.org](http://www.sargenthouse.org) (despite the website saying the museum is closed Oct.-May, simply contact them for a tour)
- 4- Visit the UUSC (details below)
- 5- Visit Harvard Divinity School (details below)

Special thanks to Jean Lenke, Jeff Liebmann and Emily Boggis for sharing their activities with us!

## WHERE DO WE WANT TO STAY?

**Motels and Hotels:** Boston is a popular tourist destination, and the cost of living here is among the highest in the nation. You will have difficulty finding a decent hotel or motel room for less than \$150.00 a night.

**Hostels** are a popular housing option for visiting groups. Hostels are usually very basic dorm-style housing, with rooms separated by sex. Because of this, make sure to have both male and female chaperones along to supervise. The hostels also sometimes have common rooms for eating and recreation. As of January 2007, Boston hostels average \$40 a night for individuals. Group discounts are sometimes available.

Cathie Brown of the UU Society of Northampton and Florence, MA, highly recommends the hostels: *“We stayed at the [Hostelling International] youth hostel which is a great bargain and the kids were able to hang out with multi-cultural folks and another UU Coming of Age class from Ohio. The hostel has a living room on each floor and bunk style beds as well as a kitchen, TV room and computers the kids can use. For \$35 per person per night (includes breakfast) it can't be beat.”*

For general information on the Boston-area hostels, see [www.hostelz.com](http://www.hostelz.com) or [www.hostels.com](http://www.hostels.com).

**The Eliot and Pickett House**, the UUA's bed and breakfast, is our most highly recommended lodging. It's in the heart of Boston, directly behind the 25 Beacon St. UUA headquarters, right on the Boston Common and next door to the Massachusetts State House.

Eliot and Pickett House has 20 rooms. 11 are large rooms and have two beds. 9 have one bed with private and shared baths. The special Coming of Age room rate is around \$120 per room, and includes a continental breakfast. With up to four youth allowed per room (i.e. \$30 per person), the price is cheaper than any hostel in Boston, and it is much more luxurious and convenient. The Pickett and Eliot House phone number is (617) 948-4679, and they can also be reached at [e&p@uua.org](mailto:e&p@uua.org).

Kate Starr from All Souls in Tulsa, OK brings their COA class to Boston every spring and stay in Eliot and Pickett House: *“We always stay at the Eliot& Pickett house B&, I love the central location near the Boston Commons. Everything is close-by and within walking distance. It's a great place to use as our main base.”*

Claudette Dirsmith of the Northshore UU Church of Fairfield, IL also highly recommends bringing youth groups to the Eliot and Pickett House: *“Staying there is fantastic. Even though it's really plush, and that's not really necessary, one day those kids will say, “I stayed on Beacon Hill.” That's really important. It makes them feel important. It has a wonderful atmosphere. The hostels are also affordable, but there's nowhere to gather the group together. Hostels have very basic accommodations...The E+P house, on the other hand, is wonderful.”*

**Home Hospitality:** Occasionally it is possible for visitors to arrange to be housed in the homes of local UUs. There is no formal way the UUA can help with this. Such arrangements are made between leaders of the visiting group and religious educators and other congregational leaders they may know in the Boston area. Since a great deal of organizing is required to set up home hospitality, it is frequently done on a reciprocal basis.

Although it is a lot of work, home hospitality has several advantages. The visitors get a chance to meet and know other UU families, sometimes forming relationships that last a lifetime. Also, home hospitality is financially beneficial for the traveling group, as it is not traditional for host families to charge anything for bed, breakfast, or transportation to and from the church. If you are lucky enough to be able to negotiate a home hospitality arrangement with a congregation in the area, be sure you and your local contact are clear about what is expected from host families.

**Staying in a UU congregation's building:** Staying overnight in a Boston area UU congregation's worship or religious education space is another possible housing alternative. There are over 60 congregations within very easy commuting distance of Boston. Many of them are gracious enough to offer floor space to visiting youth groups. Some will offer kitchen facilities; others cannot. Very few have showers or bathtubs, which can be frustrating for people who are accustomed to washing daily. Youth or adults with accessibility issues or allergies may also have difficulty with sleeping on the floor.

For Boston-area UU congregations, see <http://tinyurl.com/uucongregations>. To search by Zip Code, use the downtown Boston code 02108.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

There is more to see and do in Boston and its surrounding communities than can possibly fit in one visit. Following are a few suggestions, arranged geographically, of places you may want to consider as you plan:

### **Boston/Cambridge:**

- *Visit the UUA headquarters at 25 Beacon Street.*

Please consider beginning your visit to Boston with a stop by the lobby and bookstore of the UUA building at 25 Beacon St. **The building is open on weekdays, 9am-5pm September-June and 9am-4pm July-August.** Our UUA information assistant/receptionist would be happy to provide you with more information about the UUA, with free souvenirs, and with guidance on visiting nearby Unitarian Universalist sites.

Group tours of the 25 Beacon St. building may be scheduled to **begin between 3 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on weekdays (September – June)**. Due to summer hours, tours of the UUA during July and August are only available at **3pm on weekdays**. Tours will be confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis. The UUA is closed on weekends.

If you are interested in a tour, please book now, as time slots are already filling up!

To request a tour or for more information about Unitarian Universalist sites in Boston, please contact the UUA Information Assistant/Receptionist at (617) 948-4652 or [info@uua.org](mailto:info@uua.org)

If possible, we recommend bringing your youth to the UUA early on in your trip. It gives them a good jumping off point for Boston and their UU Heritage exploration.

- *Meet with a staff member from the UUA Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries.*

Staff members of the UUA Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries are available for constituent meetings to discuss how we can strengthen and deepen our ministry and our faith community together and for you to share your thoughts and hopes with UUA Staff. We would like to hear what your youth group and congregation are doing! What's working? How can Unitarian Universalism grow more vibrant, inclusive, meaningful, and powerful? What are your hopes and vision for Unitarian Universalism?]

If your group is interested in this sort of conversation, please email [youth@uua.org](mailto:youth@uua.org) or call (617) 948-4350 to schedule your visit. So that we can determine which staff member is best suited to meet with you, please indicate what you would like to discuss and send any questions you have in advance if possible.

If there are other particular people or offices you want to see while at the UUA, call ahead to see if they'll be available to see you: [www.uua.org/staff](http://www.uua.org/staff).

- *Visit our downtown churches.* Call ahead to see if someone can show you around First Church ([www.firstchurchboston.org/](http://www.firstchurchboston.org/)), Arlington Street Church ([www.ascboston.org](http://www.ascboston.org)), and King's Chapel ([www.kings-chapel.org/educationft.html](http://www.kings-chapel.org/educationft.html)). They are very different from one another, and each one has a fascinating history and present to share. All are within easy walking distance of one another and the UUA.

Barry Andrews bring a COA group to Boston from UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, Manhasset, NY  
“When we go to Arlington St. Church someone tells us about the historic role of the church and William Ellery Channing. Then they get to go ring the bells in the belfry which is always a highlight.”

- **Visit the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.** Just across the river from the UUA, accessible by a 12-minute subway ride, the UUSC gives an exciting glimpse into the immediate and physical changes that UU values can have on the world. Past groups have participated in lobbying and other campaigns during their visits to the UUSC offices. For more about the UUSC, please see their website, [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org).
- **Visit the Harvard Divinity School.** Not far from the UUSC in Cambridge is the Harvard Divinity School. Learn about the historic connections between Harvard University and Unitarianism. For tours call Scott at (617) 495-5761. <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/>
- **Follow the Freedom Trail.** The trail begins right next door to the UUA at the Massachusetts State House, and is an ideal way to get to know Boston in the course of two or three hours. The 21 historic buildings, sites and monuments on the Trail include many sights of particular UU interest. For a map of the trail, visit the Boston Visitor Information Center located on the Boston Common near the Park Street subway station. [www.cityofboston.gov/freedomtrail](http://www.cityofboston.gov/freedomtrail). There is also a UU Walking Tour of Boston pamphlet available online (<http://tinyurl.com/uuwalkingtour>) and at the UUA headquarters at 25 Beacon St. that overlaps with much of the Freedom Trail.
- **Follow the Black Heritage Trail.** The trail explores the history and lives of African Americans in 19th century Boston, when Unitarianism was a significant presence on Beacon Hill. Both self-guided and led tours are available. The UUA's headquarters are only one block from the beginning of this trail, making it a convenient addition to your itinerary. For more information on the trail, or to schedule a guided tour, please see [www.afroammuseum.org/trail.htm](http://www.afroammuseum.org/trail.htm) or [www.nps.gov/boaf](http://www.nps.gov/boaf).

If you plan on taking this tour, you may be interested in the book *Sarah's Long Walk*, published by Beacon Press. This book relates the true story of an African-American child who lived on Beacon Hill in the 19th century, whose struggle for integrated schools changed America.  
<http://www.uua.org/bookstore>.

- **Stroll through the Boston Public Garden.** The Public Garden is a lovely park with flowers, a lagoon, and statues. On one corner of the Garden, across the street from Arlington Street Church, is a statue of William Ellery Channing, as well as statues of other Unitarians and Universalists. If you come when the weather is warm, the swan boats will be paddling up and down the lagoon. Anyone who fondly remembers *Make Way For Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey will want a ride, and want to see the duck family statues near by. [www.swanboats.com](http://www.swanboats.com)
- **Go for a boat ride in Boston Harbor.** Sightseeing cruises explore Boston's harbors and outlying islands, with narration provided by the captain. Whale-watching expeditions sail between April 15 and November 1. Harbor tours last 45 minutes; plan on 3-4 hours for a whale watch. You could also take a Duck Tour, which is a tour of both downtown Boston and the harbor in an amphibious vehicle (on land and in the water). These tours can be out of the price range of some youth groups, but for those who have done enough fundraising, they can be a memorable experience. Check before you book any boat tours to make sure that none of the members of your group get seasick. [www.bostonharborcruises.com](http://www.bostonharborcruises.com) or [www.bostonducktours.com](http://www.bostonducktours.com).

*“Most... loved the Duck Tour,” says Carpenter. “We always get our own vehicle and the kids have a grand time - and it's a great overview of Boston and its history. Sometimes the tour speech is better than others.”*

- **Eat lunch and shop at Quincy Market.** Anyone who is into shopping, eating, and tourist watching loves this place. The center building, Faneuil Hall, is devoted exclusively to foods. For lunch you can get anything from pizza to raw oysters just by walking up to one of the booths. The surrounding buildings are a shopper's paradise. ([www.cityofboston.gov/freedomtrail/faneuilhall.asp](http://www.cityofboston.gov/freedomtrail/faneuilhall.asp))
- **Other places to eat:** There are many worthy places to eat for not much money in Boston other than Quincy Market. Near the Commons, there are:
  - **Chinatown**—either walk from the UUA headquarters across the common, or take the T to the Orange Line Chinatown stop, the Green Line Boylston T stop and the Red Line South Station stop for great Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Malaysian, and ‘vegetarian Buddhist’ restaurants. If you have some time, are feeling adventurous, and aren't strictly vegetarian, order Dim Sum, a meal of unusual appetizers.
  - **The Corner Mall** food court—on the corner of Winter and Washington Streets, a block from both Park Street and Downtown Crossing T stops. Perfectly acceptable Indian, Thai, Japanese, Greek, Cajun, Italian, and American (Subway, McDonalds) foods, and convenient seating for large groups.
  - **Legal Sea Food**—A gigantic seafood restaurant right in front of the Aquarium (Aquarium stop on the Blue T Line) on the docks of Boston Harbor.
  - **The entire North End**—This section of Boston is famous for its Italian food. There is fresh pasta and pizza everywhere, finished by famed canolis from Mike's Pastry shop. A great stop if you are doing the Freedom Trail.
  - **And anything else your heart could desire**—If there is a particular type of food you would like, chances are it's available in Boston. Everything from Moroccan grills to smoothie stands to Ethiopian restaurants to Irish pub grub to raw oyster bars are here.
- **Other entertainment:** Many groups also enjoy these attractions:
  - **New England Aquarium:** ([www.neaq.org/index.flash4.html](http://www.neaq.org/index.flash4.html)),
  - **Museum of Science:** ([www.mos.org](http://www.mos.org)), (where they have a laser show recommended by Cathie Brown of the UU Society of Northampton and Florence, MA)
  - **USS Constitution**, also known as “Old Ironsides,” ([www.ussconstitution.navy.mil](http://www.ussconstitution.navy.mil))
  - **Paul Revere House Tour** and tour of Boston: ([www.paulreverehouse.org](http://www.paulreverehouse.org))
  - **Tour of Harvard University** “The kids love to say they've been to Harvard. It's great,” says Dirsmith.
  - **The cinemas:** (<http://movies.yahoo.com/showtimes/?z=02108>) Boston hosts some of the largest cinema screens in the country.
  - **The theater:** ([www.theatermania.com/content/listings.cfm?int\\_city\\_id=3](http://www.theatermania.com/content/listings.cfm?int_city_id=3)) The most popular show for youth groups recently has been Blue Man Group. I highly recommend getting tickets ahead of time to save a lot of hassle. However, you can sometimes buy discounted tickets at a booth in Copley Square (Green Line) for performances that evening.
- **Other resources:**
  - Check our visitor's guide website ([www.uua.org/aboutuua/boston/index.html](http://www.uua.org/aboutuua/boston/index.html)) for directions to the UUA, etc.
  - For professional travel guides to the area, see
    - Rough Guide to Boston ([www.roughguides.com](http://www.roughguides.com)),
    - Lonely Planet Guide to Boston ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)), and

- Let's Go travel guides ([www.letsgo.com](http://www.letsgo.com)). Let's Go is entirely written and staffed by Harvard students, so provides invaluable local insight.
- If you are a member of AAA, your local AAA office will give you a plethora of maps, and excellent inexpensive travel guides. They will also gladly help you plan your trip. ([www.aaa.com](http://www.aaa.com))

## Northwest of Boston

For UUs, the Lexington-Concord area is interesting for many reasons. This area is where the first battles of the Revolutionary War took place, and is where Paul Revere ended his ride. It is also home to the Unitarian transcendentalist philosophers, most notably Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, as well as the Alcott family. Not only *historically* very Unitarian, it remains a hotbed of Unitarian Universalists today.

- ***Stop by the Lexington Green*** ([fpc.lexington.ma.us/](http://fpc.lexington.ma.us/)). Theodore Parker was born in Lexington, and Emerson was the minister at Follen Community Church for a short time. Follen Church was named for Charles Follen, a Unitarian minister renowned in his day who was also later credited with introducing the Christmas tree to America.
- ***Get an overview of the events leading up to the Revolutionary War*** by stopping at the National Park Visitors Center on Rt. 2A between Lexington and Concord. [www.nps.gov/mima/vcenter.htm](http://www.nps.gov/mima/vcenter.htm)
- ***Go to Concord***, and visit:
  - First Parish Church (let them know when you want to stop by) ([www.firstparish.org](http://www.firstparish.org))
  - Concord Center ([www.concordma.com](http://www.concordma.com)),
  - The Thoreau Lyceum
  - Old North Bridge ([www.concordma.com/magazine/nov98/bridge.html](http://www.concordma.com/magazine/nov98/bridge.html)),
  - Sleepy Hollow Cemetery ([www.concordma.com/magazine/novdec01/sleepyhollow.html](http://www.concordma.com/magazine/novdec01/sleepyhollow.html)),
  - Orchard House (home of Louisa May Alcott) ([www.louisamayalcott.org](http://www.louisamayalcott.org)), and
  - Walden Pond ([www.mass.gov/dem/parks/wldn.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dem/parks/wldn.htm)). Walden is great for a picnic lunch, a lovely walk, and a swim.

## South Shore:

The Plymouth-Duxbury area has a plethora of history about the Pilgrims. You might want to start by visiting the UU First Parish Church in Plymouth ([www.firstparish.plymouth.ma.uua.org](http://www.firstparish.plymouth.ma.uua.org)) where you can see interesting stained glass windows depicting much of the area's history.

Plimoth Plantation: ([www.plimoth.org](http://www.plimoth.org)) Located 35 miles south of Boston, this re-recreation of an early Pilgrim village is open daily from April through November.

At the shore you can tour through a model of the Mayflower and take a look at Plymouth Rock. You may also want to indulge in some of the famous fried clams from one of the seaside seafood restaurants.

## North Shore:

Approximately 19 miles north of Boston, Salem is the home of many unique sites:

- This is of course the home of the famous Salem Witch trials, with accompanying museum (<http://www.salemwitchmuseum.com>), cemeteries galore, historic homes, shops, tours, etc.

([www.salemweb.com/guide/witches.shtml](http://www.salemweb.com/guide/witches.shtml)) Hundreds of artifacts related to the trials can be found at the...

- Peabody-Essex Museum ([www.pem.org/homepage](http://www.pem.org/homepage)), a huge and fascinating museum, but not for the faint of heart or short of attention.
- Nathaniel Hawthorne's House of the Seven Gables, which has an interesting tour that comes highly recommended. ([www.7gables.org](http://www.7gables.org)).
- Pickering Wharf, where there is a worthwhile show that depicts Salem in the days when it was a major seaport.
- The town also has several informative historical attractions as well as beautiful sea views and great shopping. ([www.salemweb.com/guide](http://www.salemweb.com/guide)).

Marblehead is a short drive from Salem and also worth seeing. Drive through the narrow old streets of Old Town, and then on the way home stop at Devereaux Beach for a swim. There are many good beaches in Marblehead, but this one is the biggest and easiest to find, and it has a good snack bar. ([www.marblehead.com](http://www.marblehead.com))

## **LOGISTICS FOR YOUTH GROUPS:**

### **Leaders**

When traveling with teenagers, make sure you have an adequate number of adult leaders. One adult for each 4 or 5 youth is a good ratio. At least two adults should accompany the youth, preferably one man and one woman, even if there are only three kids on the trip. The adults will have a more fun and relaxed time if they don't feel their resources are being stretched to the limit.

You might want to consider forming "touch groups" of young people who meet with an adult at specified times throughout the trip just to see how things are going. That adult can be the check-in person for the youth in this sub-group, rather than having to be always counting noses for the entire group.

You will probably find the most ready adult volunteers among the parents of the youth participants. Be aware that this does not always please the youth. Before agreeing to have a parent accompany the trip, be certain that it is okay with his or her child. There may be other adults in the congregation who would love the opportunity to visit Boston.

Before the trip, you should have a meeting with all the adults at which you talk about important issues, and come to agreement about the adult's responsibilities and expectations. Some questions at such a meeting might be:

- Do any of the adults have First Aid training? If not, should you find someone with First Aid training to come along, or should one of the adults get trained?
- Do any of the adults have health issues?
- Do the adults have former experience leading groups of teenagers?
- If you don't know any of the adults well, will you require a reference from a congregation member? Will you run a criminal background check on the adults?
- What are the rules for the trip? Who enforces them? Do the adults know that they should follow the same rules as the teens (no consuming alcohol, smoking, etc)? What happens if an adult breaks these rules?

It is very important to clear up questions such as these ahead of time, so that there won't be any surprises or misunderstandings on the road.

### **Registration form and Medical Release form**

The registration form is an extremely important document. Design it well and you will save yourself many headaches. In addition to the usual information (name, address, dates of trip, parental permission to attend, etc.) you should consider including a Code of Ethics and a Medical Release form as part of the registration form.

Sample Code of Ethics and Medical Release forms are available to download on the Youth Office website at [www.uua.org/yruu/youthoffice/pdfs/toursethics.pdf](http://www.uua.org/yruu/youthoffice/pdfs/toursethics.pdf) and [www.uua.org/yruu/youthoffice/pdfs/toursmedrelease.pdf](http://www.uua.org/yruu/youthoffice/pdfs/toursmedrelease.pdf). Print them as is, or cut, paste, and cater them to your needs. You could also consider helping your youth group create their own code of ethics, with helpful adult input. This would be a much more meaningful document, and can be a powerful way to help the youth learn to take responsibility for their actions.

In order to do the advance planning necessary for a major trip, it is important to get firm commitments well ahead of time from the participants. By charging a non-refundable deposit, you will discourage people from signing up "just in case."

## **Information for the family**

*Host an informational meeting for the parents* of the young people who sign up for the trip. At this meeting, the youth and adults can outline the plans for the trip. Strongly encourage, if not require, attendance by all youth and adults signed up for the trip. In addition to the meeting, you will still need to write a confirmation letter in which all the information is sent to the family. Parents and youth will be interested to know where you will be on each day, exactly when and from where you will be leaving and when you expect to return. Hand out an itinerary and contact information for the entire trip. If you will not be returning on a regularly scheduled plane, train or bus, think about setting up a phone tree that can be activated when you estimate you are half an hour from home so that the youth can be promptly picked up upon return. A phone tree is also useful in the event that something unexpected occurs.

*Make a list of items to bring on the trip.* The young people themselves will have a good time brainstorming the list, which will probably get fairly detailed. You may want to break the list into two categories: a "mandatory" list (which should include comfortable walking shoes, a watch, clean socks and underwear, rain gear, etc.), and an "optional" list (with things on it like cameras, playing cards, stuffed animals). Also include a list of things not to take (which is likely to include bulky items like stereos, heavily scented items, expensive items, things not conducive to group dynamics like iPods, Gameboys, etc., as well as obvious items like illegal substances and knives). At least one chaperone should pack a first-aid kit and know how to use it.

It is also helpful give guidelines about luggage limits. Everyone will find it easier if each person is limited to one duffel bag or suitcase that can be stowed or checked and one carrying bag for immediate necessities. Overpacking almost always makes for miserable traveling. Make sure all pieces of luggage are labeled with names and addresses. Consider a common identifier such as a unique cloth tied to all bags in the group, so that everyone can make sure that no bags get left behind or stolen.

*Estimate how much spending money each person is likely to need.* Make it clear if you are planning some kind of event for which cash or additional funds will be necessary. Also, if an expensive entertainment is planned, such as a night at the theater, make sure that everyone in the group can afford the tickets. If personal funds are an issue, try to raise enough money with the group fundraising to offset this need.

For planning purposes, it may be helpful to know that one one-way trip on the "T" (the subway) costs \$1.75-\$2, trains from the suburbs run about \$5 each way, and local busses are about \$1.50 per ride. If you are eating out at inexpensive restaurants for your meals, expect to pay about \$4 for breakfast, \$5-9 for lunch, and \$10-15 for dinner.

*Make a positive statement about behavioral expectations.* Be very clear what the rules are, and be clear about the consequences of breaking the rules. You might consider requiring all of the participants to sign a contract outlining the behavioral expectations for the trip. This contract is a good idea even if you know that all of the teenagers are perfect angels. It doesn't have to be harshly worded, and can even be funny while still being an efficient way of ensuring that they know what is expected of them and what the consequences of bad behavior is. You might even consider having the teenagers help write this contract. Every kid and parent should get a copy of these rules. One suggestion for language to include in the statement is:

*"No one is expecting any behavior problems on this trip. However, just so it is clear in advance what would happen if there were any problems, we want you to know there are a couple of things which would cause you to*

*get sent home at your family's expense. One of them is using any illegal substance on the trip; another is fighting or physical violence of any kind; another is purposefully leaving the group. If any situation like that were to arise, we would get in touch with your family immediately and make arrangements for you to go home."*

This will put things in perspective for the youth (and adults!).

## **Finances**

Raising money as a group for a trip can be a challenging and fun activity. However, it can be no fun at all for anyone in the youth group who is not able to go on the trip. If anyone in your youth group is not going, it may be more appropriate to suggest ways that individuals can raise money outside the group setting. In any case, it is important to encourage the young people to invest some of their own time, energy and money in this experience.

Here are some ideas from the youth groups who have visited recently:

- *Auction your skills to the congregation.* (such as “will cook you dinner,” “will give you a lesson on how to pitch a baseball,” “will sketch your house.” Take advantage of the talents of your youth group members and willing congregation members. People will sometimes pay a surprising amount of money for these services.)
- *Rake leaves, shovel driveways and sidewalks,* or do other physical labor for community members.
- Run a tag sale
- *Host a pasta (or equivalent) dinner,* and...
- *A congregation-wide talent show,* for which you charge a small admission. (this has been VERY lucrative for some groups).
- *Create a tempting commodity to sell,* such as chalice crafts, jewelry, birdhouses, shrinky-dinks, etc. Bake sales are rarely cost-effective, but other made items can be good fundraisers.
- *Set up a CafePress.com account for your congregation.* The proceeds from this online store can go to your youth group’s trip—make sure the congregation knows about this!

Some recommendations from Kathleen Carpenter: *“Our largest fundraiser is our annual district youth con held at our church and attended by youth from around the district. Our parents send lots of food to help reduce costs. All proceeds go to the trip fund. Since the trip is every other year, the proceeds from two cons benefit each trip. Other fundraisers have included coffeeshouses, brunches and lunches on Sundays, carwashes held Sunday mornings, raffles, all-age proms, a pie-in-the-face contest, youth services auctions, and the sale of poinsettias.”*

The possibilities for fundraising are endless--Get creative! People in your congregations and communities will want to support the kid’s trip; give them an opportunity to donate. Keeping this idea in mind, one group who came to Boston from the Midwest a few years ago was able to raise over \$10,000 for their trip in less than a year! While not every group will meet with this success, every little bit counts to make the trip possible.

## COMMENTS FROM PREVIOUS TRIP LEADERS

Kathleen Carpenter, DRE of the UU Church of Charlotte, NC writes:

“Our biannual Boston youth trip has three major lessons to teach our youth.

The first is about responsibility. With all the free time they are given, they are taught the challenges of time management and of freedom of action. They learn that they can use this time wisely or squander it and regret a wasted afternoon.

Second, they learn about inclusive and respectful behaviors. This means not breaking into cliques or excluding other youth during free time at the bed and breakfast or off on excursions. It also means showing respect to adults and to our host site.

And finally, this trip is expected to provide our youth with experiences that help them find their place in our faith tradition - to help them understand what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist outside the comfort of their own youth group. They learn about their religious heritage as seekers of truth and meaning. They hear about famous UUs through their tour of the UUA headquarters and, unintentionally, through the public Duck Tour. And they learn firsthand about the UU commitment to justice work.”

Karen Lewis, director of religious education at First Unitarian Church, Dallas, TX, wasn't in favor of a Boston trip when it was suggested a few years ago. "It felt too much like a pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Mecca. Unitarians don't do that. And it was expensive." But she's changed her mind after accompanying a youth group to Boston, and the trips have become a tradition at Dallas. "The trips really are amazing. We study a lot of UU history and it really does all come to life."

The Office of Information and Public Witness has seen many many groups come to visit the UUA and Boston. Here is their condensed advice for your visit: Don't drive in Boston. Rent vans, buses or use the subway. Get kids to bed early. Staying up late wrecks the next day, try to get the youth to bed at a reasonable hour. Do homework/prep before your visit. "It's better if they know UU history before they get here. They'll get more out of it. The trip itself is not a good place to learn it. There's too much going on." Talk with the kids BEFORE the trip about the importance of not staying up late; they may roll their eyes, but they also may listen. Also, adults, plan the trip so you will have a good time too! If you are enjoying yourselves, the kids will too.

Over plan, says Lewis. "You can always knock things off the list." Ask restaurants and attractions in advance for group rates.

Carpenter says, “We required several activities / tours a day as part of the group and provided free time for the rest of the day. Youth must always stay in groups of three or more except for approved situations. Every year, the youth tell us their favorite part of the trip was this freedom and responsibility. They really appreciate the trust and very rarely violate it.

...We toured the UU Service Committee office this year for the first time and they included a service (advocacy) project which was great. The kids liked it and I think it brought home the message of their personal power to affect change.”

Jamie Forbes, DRE at The Unitarian Church, Westport, CT, makes a point to bring appropriate quotes for youth to read when standing in the pulpits, at the gravesites, or the statues of famous UUs. "The kids love this trip," she says. "It's the high point of the year."

Have multiple copies of medical permission slips as well as parental contact information, says Ann D'Attilio, DRE at First UU Society of Albany, NY. (Each adult should have a copy of each kid's info.)

Gabrielle Farrell, religious educator at All Souls Unitarian, Washington, D.C. and formerly of First Unitarian, St. Louis, says: shuffle kids frequently to aid over-bonding; limit budget-sapping snacking; choose chaperones carefully.

Lilli Rhodes of the UU Society: East in Manchester, CT recommends that the teenagers and their parents complete a post-trip evaluation, so that the trip can improve each year. She also notes that regular updates to the home church (via phone, or email) help the entire congregation stay involved in the trip. This generates a lot of excitement about the trip at the church, and helps build intergenerational community. If the trip spans a weekend, it's great fun if someone reads an update to the congregation at the Sunday service. Even if updates during the trip aren't feasible, consider sharing your experiences with the congregation on your return, especially including any pictures taken on the trip.

Gaia Brown, formerly DRE at North Shore Unitarian, Deerfield, IL, and now at UU Fellowship of Northern Nevada, Reno, NV, recommends a video, [\*Portrait of Boston and the Freedom Trail\*](#), (\$20, [www.eparks.com](http://www.eparks.com)) before going. Guard against those youth who will spend all their money on souvenirs and go without food. "The trip really is a big deal," says Brown, "The bonding that occurs is incredible." Farrell adds, "Kids who go on the Boston Trip stay with the church in some capacity. Those who don't pretty much drift away."

They may not say so at the time, but the experience is valuable to youth, says Lewis. "The payoff is never immediate. They may roll their eyes and fidget while you're explaining something to them, but weeks later they'll bring up something at a worship service."

Claudette Dirsmith of the Northshore UU Church of Fairfield, IL, says, "I have done this trip for 7 years and each year it gets better."

"Let me finish by saying our kids absolutely love this trip," ends Carpenter. "It is the highlight of high school for most of our youth - and they tell everyone that in their baccalaureate speeches. They always remark on the fun, the feeling of connectedness to UUism, and, most of all, to the appreciation for the trust we gave them by building free time into their schedules."