

Teacher Development Renaissance Module, Handouts and Appendices

** Before the workshop, read the handouts that are listed in **bold type** to enhance the workshop experience.*

Session 1: Teaching and Learning — What Shapes Us?

1. Introduction to the Renaissance Program and Religious Education Credentialing
2. Preparation for Module Evaluation
- 3. Schedule of Sessions**
- 4. Module and Session Goals**
5. The Mutuality of Making a Difference
- 6. Shared Praxis**
7. Lesson Planning Using Shared Praxis
8. Tom Groome's Shared Praxis in Action
- 9. Reflections on *The Courage to Teach***
- 10. Reflection Questions**

Session 2: Teachers as Learners and Seekers

- 11. The Soul Only Avails: Teaching as a Spiritual Act**
- 12. Teaching in Faith: Providing Tools to Support and Sustain Volunteers**
13. Channing on Teachers
- 14. The Care and Feeding of Volunteers: Part One**
15. Tips for Successful Recruiting
16. Recruitment Skits
17. Safety, Health, and Ethics in Congregations
18. Code of Ethics Sample
19. Sample Health and Safety Guidelines

Session 3: Supporting Learners and Seekers

20. Faith Development Outline
21. Abbreviated Summary: Child Development
22. Abbreviated Summary: Adolescent Development
23. Howard Gardner on Multiple Intelligences
- 24. Seven Ways Congregations Can Embrace People with Disabilities**
25. Sample Referral Form for Individuals with Special Needs
26. The Children of Jowonio
27. The Paradoxes of Space

28. Creating an Environment of Acceptance and Mutuality

29. Discipline in Sunday School: What Would a UU Do?

Session 4: Toolkits for Teachers – Empowerment for Learning and Seeking

30. Support Checklist

31. The Care and Feeding of Volunteers: Part Two

32. Sample Religious Education Teacher Contract

33. Team Teaching

34. A Fictional (But Not Unrealistic) Teaching Team Rotation

35. Leader Reflection and Planning

36. Sample Teacher Check-in Form

37. How to Be Sure the Teacher Development Workshop Goes Home with Your Teachers

38. Tapestry of Faith – Spiritual Preparation

39. Creating Covenants

40. Children’s Covenant

41. Teacher Dedication

42. Group Project and Presentation

Session 5: Group Presentations and Closing Worship

43. Selected Online Resources

Appendix 1: Small Group Ministry

Unitarian Universalist Teacher Development Using a Small Group Ministry Model, by Gail Forsyth-Vail

Small Group Ministry and Lifespan Faith Development, by Rev. Helen Zidowecki

Appendix 2: Spiritual Practices to Use with Children

Meditation with Children: A Guide, by Susan Freudenthal

Writing Prayers, by Tracey L. Hurd, Ph.D.

Handout 1

Introduction to the Renaissance Program and Religious Education Credentialing

The Renaissance Program has a distinguished history of providing standardized training in a specific topic useful to religious educators (as well as parish ministers, seminarians and lay leaders). The Renaissance program is a major component of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Religious Education (RE) Credentialing program. Most of the modules are designed as “face to face” gatherings of 15 hours and may be used in any order:

- Administration as Leadership
- Adult Faith Development and Programming
- Curriculum Planning
- Ministry with Youth
- Multicultural Religious Education
- Philosophy of Religious Education
- Teacher Development
- Unitarian Universalist Identity
- Worship for All Ages

Other modules are designed as distance learning modules of 30-35 hours:

- Unitarian Universalist History
- Unitarian Universalist Theology

For more information, visit the [Renaissance program](#) page of the UUA website.

The Religious Education Credentialing Program is a three-level program for religious education professionals intended to nurture the call to religious education as a profession, to provide a comprehensive path for professional development, and to articulate and uphold professional standards and guidelines in religious education leadership.

For more information, visit the [RE Credentialing](#) page of the UUA website.

Handout 2

Preparation for Module Evaluation

Locate the Renaissance Program [Participant Online Evaluation Form](#) online. Please complete and submit it within one week of completion of this module. The official Renaissance Certificate will be sent to you within ten days of the UUA's receipt of your evaluation. All feedback is confidential and is seen only by Renaissance staff; feedback to leaders is shared only in the aggregate. Your candid comments are very helpful in developing strong leaders and a strong Renaissance program.

You will be asked to provide feedback in three areas. You may wish to take notes during the module to help you submit a thoughtful and constructive evaluation.

Module Leadership – consider each leader separately

Group Facilitation Skills

Knowledge of Content Area

Sensitivity to Different Learning Styles

Teamwork with other Leader

Organization/Communication

Other Comments or Suggestions for Leaders

The Learning Experience

What was most valuable for you?

Please share at least five significant learnings from the module:

What expectations did you bring to the module? Did the module meet your expectations?

Please explain.

In what ways will you use the learnings from this module?

How will you share your learnings in the congregation or with peers?

Other comments or suggestions about the learning experience

The Reader

I read: all/most/some/none of the reader

I found the reader: very useful/somewhat useful/not useful

Comments on the reader.

Handout 3

Schedule of Sessions

Session 1: Teaching and Learning — What Shapes Us? 2.5 hours

- Opening Ritual and Introductions
- Orientation
- Making a Covenant
- The Mutuality of Making a Difference
- Shared Praxis
- The Courage to Teach
- Reflection
- Closing

Session 2: Teachers as Learners and Seekers 3 hours

- Opening
- What Teachers Bring
- Mutuality of Teachers and Those Who Teach
- The “Good Teacher”
- Recruiting Volunteer Teachers
- Safe Congregations
- Reflection
- Closing

Session 3: Supporting Learners and Seekers 3 hours

- Opening
- Child and Youth Development
- Different Ways of Knowing
- Learners and Designated Special Needs
- Paradoxes of Space
- Keeping the Classroom Covenant
- Reflection
- Closing

Session 4: Toolkits for Teachers – Empowerment for Learning and Seeking 3 hours

Opening

Nuts and Bolts

Dealing with the Unexpected

Planning a Teacher Development Event

Reflection

Closing

Session 5: Group Presentations and Closing Worship 3.5 hours

Final Group Preparation

Opening

Group Presentations and Response

Loose Ends

Reflection

Closing Worship

Handout 4

Module and Session Goals

Goals for the Module:

- To reflect on religious education philosophy and relate that philosophy to the faith development of teachers
- To participate in a community of religious educators through study, worship, creating, and networking
- To gain understanding of teachers' contributions and needs
- To increase understanding of child development and its relationship to teaching and learning
- To understand issues related to safety and ethics
- To explore and develop strategies for recruitment, support, appreciation, and recognition of volunteers
- To work together to develop a sample teacher development program

Session 1 Goals:

- Model creating a sense of anticipation as the module begins
- Orient the group to the module
- Model a welcoming focus on each participant
- Introduce the concept of mutuality in teaching and learning

Session 2 Goals:

- Celebrate the gifts teachers bring to religious education
- Consider what teachers need to be effective
- Explore best practices in recruitment
- Focus on safe congregations and the teacher's responsibilities

Session 3 Goals:

- Highlight the development of children and youth
- Review ways of knowing
- Consider special needs of learners
- Explore paradoxes in teaching and learning space
- Consider ways to help children keep their classroom covenant

Session 4 Goals:

- Provide practical “nuts and bolts” suggestions to help programming go smoothly
- Consider how teachers may deal with the unexpected
- Facilitate group planning for a teacher development event

Session 5 Goals:

- Provide ideas for teacher development events
- Tie up loose ends
- Celebrate the time spent together and the good work done

Handout 5

The Mutuality of Making a Difference

As...stories are told, we are reminded of many facts about good teaching: that it comes in many forms, that the imprint of good teachers remains long after the facts they gave us have faded, and that it is important to thank our mentors, no matter how belatedly.

Mentoring is a mutuality that requires more than meeting the right teacher: the teacher must meet the right student. In this encounter, not only are the qualities of the mentor revealed, but the qualities of the student are drawn out in a way that is equally revealing.

-----Parker J. Palmer, in *The Courage to Teach* (1998.) p.21

Handout 6

Shared Praxis

Shared praxis is a way of sharing information and of building community. This approach was pioneered by Paolo Freire in his literary and social justice work with adults and introduced to Unitarian Universalist religious educators by Thomas Groome in *Christian Religious Education* (1980).

The **shared praxis approach** is composed of a focusing activity and five steps, or movements, in which to address any issue of significance, moving back and forth between individual and community, in reflection and action. Then, the first step in the model takes the individual in the present, by naming a present understanding of an issue in their life (their own truth). The second step helps the individual examine the basis and impact of that present understanding. The third step moves the person into dialogue with the faith community so that both are enriched by individual and community stories. The fourth step continues the dialogue between and among the individual and faith community as meaning is made of the intersections of the individual and community stories. The fifth step leads to decision for action on an issue on the part of both the community and the individual, in the context of the faith community. And so the reflection and dialogue can continue by returning to the first step and moving through the process again and again. In his later writing, *Educating for Life* (1998), Groome focuses on the spiritual life of the educator (including a focus on parents as religious educators) as absolutely critical to the educational process.

Praxis: Purposeful, intentional and reflectively chosen ethical action (reflection and action).

Shared: By individuals within a faith community.

--Turn people to look at and express their lives in the world -- what is there, what are they up to, and what is going on around them.

--Get people to reflect on their life in the world -- to contemplate it, question it, imagine new possibilities for it, and even probe their own reflections of it all, discerning why they think or feel or perceive the way they do. (Groome, 1998, p.161)

Naming Our Knowing

Learners are invited to relate the theme to their own experiences.

Critical Reflection

Learners reflect on and share how/why this is so.

Community Story and Vision .

Learners hear the Community Story and Vision related to the theme.

Dialectic Learners ask what this Story says to them, and what their stories contribute to the Community Story and Vision.

Faith Response for the Future

A course of action—individual or group—is envisioned and may be acted on.

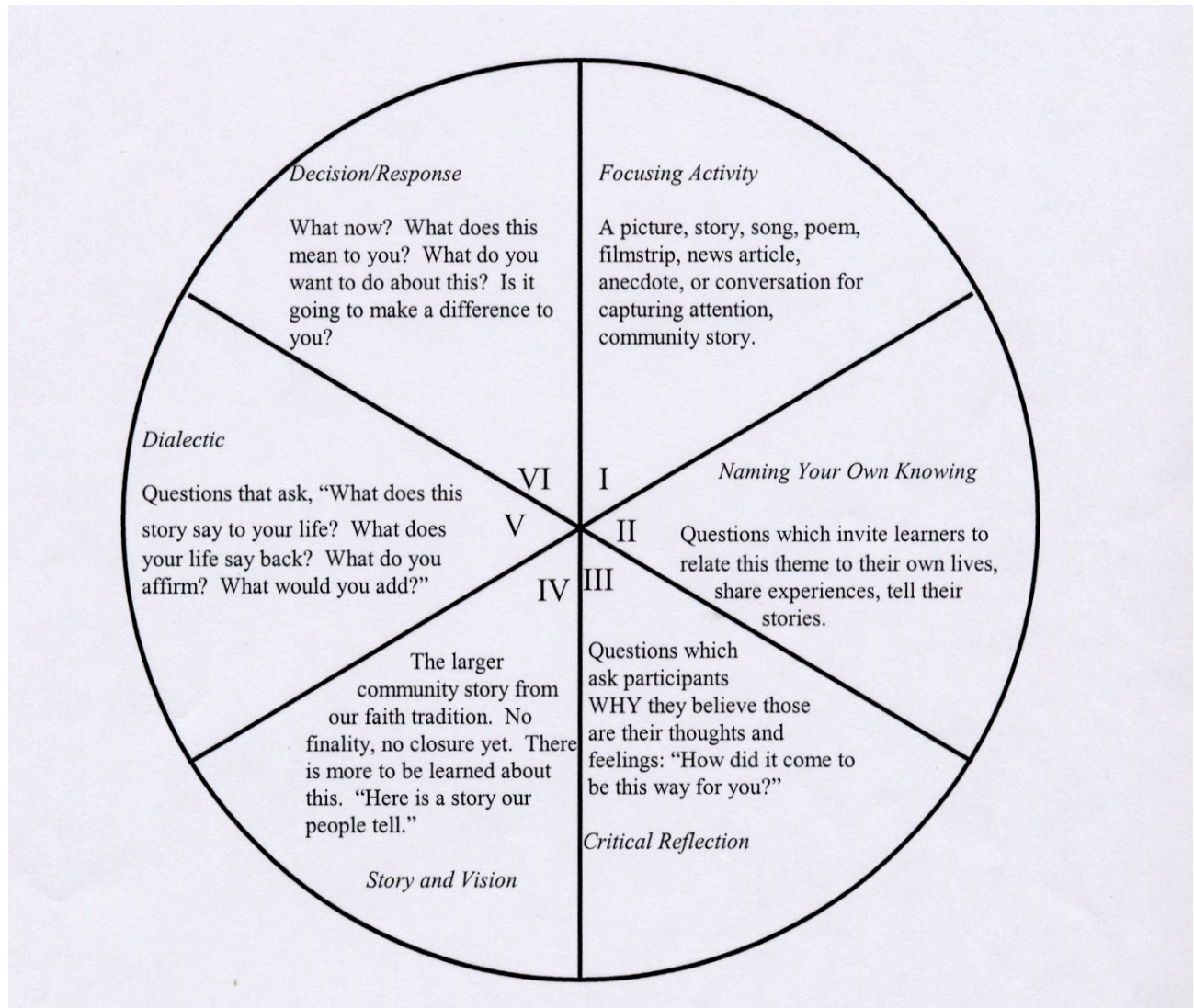
Shared praxis is a process that may occur over and over.

Handout 7

Lesson Planning Using Shared Praxis

Graphic Presentation of the Shared Praxis Approach, adapted from Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, HarperSan Francisco, 1980.

Note: The numbering of the parts includes the focusing activity.



Handout 8

Tom Groome's Shared Praxis in Action

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A lesson plan is constructed of five “movements” that encourage learners to reflect on the faith of their community and to incorporate that faith (as the individuals have come to understand it) in their daily living.

Early Childhood [Wonderful Welcome Session One: “The Gift of Love”](#)

lesson concept: To introduce children to the concept of intangible things

1. Focusing Activity: Children are presented with The Wonder Box
2. Naming Your Own Knowing: Children wonder, What could be inside?
3. Critical Reflection: The “What Is It?” game - children pretend various imaginary things are in the box.
4. Story and Vision: Story, “The Real Gift” which talks about intangible gifts such as love, welcome, time.
5. Dialectic: Discussion of the story followed by shadow play.
6. Decision/response: Spending time making a craft with an new adult friend in the congregation and/or continuing exploring the concept with parents at home.

Middle Childhood [Toolbox of Faith Session Ten: “Courage and Conviction \(Saddlebags\)”](#)

1. Focusing Activity: There is a display of pictures depicting people showing courage and conviction.
2. Naming Your Own Knowing: Children talk about what they see in the pictures
3. Critical Reflection: Children write down some of their own convictions.
4. Story and Vision: “Eliza Tupper Wilkes: Riding for Faith, Hope and Love”
5. Dialectic: Acting out the story; making courage stones.
6. Decision/response: Children review the convictions they wrote down earlier and decide which ones they might take a courageous stand for.

Middle School [Compass Points](#) Session Thirteen: “It’s You Who Say That I Am”

lesson concept: to learn UU views of Jesus and how Jesus came to be viewed by different individuals

1. Focusing Activity: Thoughts for the Day (pithy quotes read without comment)
2. Taking a Stand (agreeing or disagreeing with several concepts about Jesus)
3. Critical reflection: Discussion of how people become “celebrities” and the “Whisper Game,” which shows how a message can be misunderstood/corrupted as it is told from one person to another.
4. Story and Vision: Watching Jesus Christ Superstar
5. Dialectic: Time for reflection and journaling.
6. Decision/response: Taking a stand again on the concepts introduced earlier, to see if the response has changed over the morning.

For more information:

[Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis](#) by Thomas Groome

Handout 9

Reflections on The Courage to Teach

By Pat Hoerl

Author: Parker Palmer is a writer, teacher, and activist who works independently on issues in education, community, spirituality, and social change. He is a senior associate of the American Association for Higher Education and senior advisor to the Fetzer Institute, for whom he designed the Teacher Formation Program for K--12 teachers. His publications include *The Active Life*, *To Know As We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey*, and recently *Let Your Life Speak: Listening For the Voice of Vocation*.

We become teachers for reasons of the heart. But many of us lose heart as time goes by. How can we take heart, alone and together, so we can give heart to our students and our world – which is what good teachers do.

Palmer writes that we teach who we are and invites us into a deeper inquiry about education – teaching and learning – that is often overlooked. It is not the “what” question (what subjects shall we teach?) nor the “how” question (what methods and techniques are required?) nor the “why” question (for what purpose and to what ends do we teach?). It is the “who” question: who is the self that teaches? The book explores the inner landscape of the teacher’s life along three related pathways – intellectual, emotional, and spiritual.

At the heart of *The Courage to Teach* is Palmer’s image of teaching: “To teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced.” He defines “truth” as “an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline.” The purpose of leadership in community is to create a teaching and learning space centered on the “great things” that evoke the virtues we cherish in education: inviting diversity, embracing ambiguity, welcoming creative conflict, practicing honesty, experiencing humility, becoming free.

These are a few key themes from each chapter:

Heart of the Teacher: Identity and Integrity in Teaching

- If we want to grow as teachers, we must learn to talk to each other about our inner lives, our own identity and integrity.
- Identity lies in the intersection of the diverse forces that make up a life, while integrity lies in relating to those forces in ways that bring us wholeness and life.
- Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique.
- The best gift we receive from great mentors is not their knowledge or their approach to teaching but the sense of self they evoke within us.

A Culture of Fear: Education and the Disconnected Life

- Fear is a powerful feature of both educational culture and our inner landscape – the fear of having a live encounter with “otherness” in a participant, a colleague, a subject, or the voice of the inner teacher. The sequence of fears begins in the fear of diversity, leads to the fear of conflict, the fear of losing identity, and the final fear of the challenge to change our lives.
- Knowing is always communal. Knowing is a human way to seek relationship, to have encounters and exchanges that will alter us.

The Hidden Wholeness: Paradox in Teaching and Learning

- The nature of the human self is paradoxical: for every gift or strength we possess, there is a corresponding weakness or liability.
- We need to embrace opposites and appreciate paradoxes.
- Six paradoxes to build into the teaching and learning space:
 - The space should be bounded and open.
 - The space should be hospitable and “charged.”
 - The space should invite the voice of the individual and the voice of the group.
 - The space should honor the “little” stories of participants and the “big” stories of the disciplines and traditions.
 - The space should support solitude and surround it with the resources of community.
 - The space should welcome both silence and speech.

Knowing in Community: Joined By the Grace of Great Things

- To teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced.
- Truth is the eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline.
- The community of truth includes a transcendent dimension of truth knowing and truth--- telling that takes us beyond relativism and absolutism alike.

Teaching in Community: A Subject-Centered Education

- The best classroom is neither teacher---centered nor participant---centered but subject--- centered.
- To move us closer to the community of truth in the classroom, we must make ourselves as dependent on the participants as they are on us.

Learning in Community: The Conversation of Colleagues

- We need to create a collegial community of discourse that promote “good talk about good teaching,” such as workshops, learning communities, evaluations.

Divided No More: Teaching from a Heart of Hope

- The four stages of a movement to reform education are:
 - The personal decision to live “divided no more.”
 - The formation of “communities of congruence.”
 - The move to “go public” with our values and commitments.
 - The emergence of a system of “alternative rewards.”

Handout 10

Reflection Questions

SESSION 1

How have my ideas about the gifts I bring to teaching changed, if at all?

How can I enhance the concept of covenanting for my teachers?

How has my understanding of shared praxis been enlarged or clarified?

What questions has this first session raised that I would like to have addressed before the end of this module? (Add them to the Parking Lot!)

SESSION 2

What is my role as teacher of the volunteers in the program for which I am responsible?

How can I reinforce the mutuality of my relationship with these volunteers?

Who is a person I would like to recruit or retain as a teacher, and given what I have considered about teacher recruitment today, how would I approach that person?

How can I encourage teachers to celebrate the gifts they bring to religious education?

SESSION 3

What have I discovered or affirmed about a specific aspect of child or youth development that I want to share with one or more of my teachers?

How can teachers' behaviors feed into the classroom management mix—for better or worse?

Are there ways in which my learnings about child and youth development translate for my work with adults?

How can I use Palmer's thoughts about space to create learning and teaching environments?

SESSION 4

What support am I ready to give teachers so they can help the children they teach deal with big life issues, such as bullying, divorce, death?

How does attention to "nuts and bolts" details of the program enhance faith development?

What "aha" moment have I had as I worked on the group project?

SESSION 5

How can I communicate to teachers or potential teachers that teaching in religious education can be a spiritual practice that will enrich their lives?

What will I do to ensure that my own work with teachers and parents will be a spiritual practice?

Handout 11

The Soul Only Avails: Teaching as a Spiritual Act

Dr. Barry Andrews

I would like to share a few thoughts with you about teaching-and I mean especially religious education-as a spiritual practice. In my twenty years as a religious educator I have recruited hundreds of church schoolteachers. I am deeply grateful to them for volunteering. The lives of our children and youth have been tremendously enriched by the contribution of these men and women. The fact is, the congregations I have served simply couldn't have had a religious education program without them. Some of those who volunteered were teachers in the public schools, but the overwhelming majority was not. I would say that about ninety percent of them had no previous experience as teachers. Most were simply well intentioned parents who had relatively little experience working with children in groups. I don't mean for a moment to suggest that any of these people were lesser Sunday school teachers for not having a background in education. Far from it. Nor do I wish to slight professional teachers who love children and teaching so much that they are willing to give an extra day of the week to R.E.

But I do mean to say that what is important in religious education is not how much you know about children, teaching or even Unitarian Universalism, but how much you are willing to give of yourself, of your soul. Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "In dealing with my child, my Latin and Greek, my accomplishments and my money stead me nothing; but as much soul as I have avails." I would say that this is true of religious education as well. We do try to equip Sunday school teachers with the basics with training and advice about teaching, curriculum, and the Unitarian Universalist philosophy of religious education. We try to pair new teachers with more experienced ones. We encourage teachers to attend workshops and classes. But there is only so much we can do with the time we have. The fact of the matter is that the best education our volunteers can receive about managing a classroom or what it means to be a practicing Unitarian Universalist is through the experience of teaching itself. I would be the last to suggest that knowledge doesn't count; but it is not the most important asset in religious education. The essential qualities of a good church schoolteacher are a love of children, a sense of wonder about life, empathy

and the ability to listen, and a willingness more to share who you are than what you know. Above all, teachers are mentors and companions of the children as they undertake their religious journeys in life.

Compared to other churches and religious traditions, Unitarian Universalism is not strongly identified. Despite our inclusiveness and generosity of spirit, Unitarian Universalism is hardly a household word. Unitarian Universalist children and youth can feel isolated among their peers and family relatives. Our intellectual thrust is hard for young children to grasp. It can be difficult even for our youth to explain to others what a Unitarian Universalist is or believes. Our heritage is distinguished, but it is not rich with tradition the way Catholicism and Judaism are. We have only recently begun to develop distinct rituals, traditions and symbols, which are important building blocks of a child's religious identity. Without a sense of tradition, being a Unitarian Universalist can resemble being a Democrat or Republican. It may be what a child thinks or even stands for, but it is not necessarily who he or she is.

Having a Unitarian Universalist religious identity is not necessarily the same thing as knowing our history and heritage, although it includes them. Our heritage is made up of our values and ideals, our art, architecture, music and poetry, our summer camps and sacred sites, our traditions and folklore. Our history includes all the facts about us--people, places and events, not only "from long ago and many lands," but also here and now at our own churches and fellowships.

Fundamentally, religious identity is a feeling that, "This is my church. People know me here. And I know them." As much as a knowledge of their history and heritage, children need experiences of common worship, intergenerational activities, and "at-homeness" in the church, including familiar faces and spaces. This is a tall order. Helping to nurture a sense of religious identity is primarily a parental responsibility. But those of us in religious education have made a commitment to aid and abet the parents of our congregation's children in this important effort.

We guarantee, as parents or teachers, that our children will remain Unitarian Universalists. We do believe, after all, that at some point our children will make their own

decisions about religion, as well as other matters. But as long as they are with us we can foster their sense of identity as Unitarian Universalists, and, in this way, at least increase the odds that they will continue to find a religious home here.

I put the emphasis on religious identity because it involves more than knowing about our Unitarian Universalist history and heritage, even our principles. Religion is not, fundamentally, about anything. Religion is life. Or as Emerson put it, religion is neither doctrines nor rituals; "it is not something else to be got, to be added, but it is a new life of those faculties which you have." If it is about anything, religion is about being alive and engaged in the world. It is 'about enchantment and compassion. And it is about transformation and self-renewal. For William Ellery Channing, "The great end in religious instruction is to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish spiritual life." As religious educators, our task "is not to stamp our minds on the young, but to stir up their own; not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth; . . . not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs." In all the years since Channing wrote these words, no one has said anything wiser and more profound on the subject of religious education. Teaching the young, then, is not about filling their heads, but expanding their horizons; it is not about charting a course for them, but about being companions with them on their own journey in life. I am convinced that in religious education "the soul only avails," and that teaching is a spiritual practice requiring a certain discipline or adherence to fundamental principles. Perhaps you have others to add to the list, but here are the seven principles I would suggest as essential to the spiritual practice of religious education.

The first principle is respect the children. Our program is not centered on the curriculum, but on the child. If I may, I would like to offer yet another bit of advice from Emerson, who had this to say: "Our own experience with children instructs us that the secret of education is in respecting the children. It is not for us to choose what they shall know, what they shall do. By our tampering and thwarting and too much governing they may be hindered from their end. Respect the children. Be not too much their parent. But we hear the outcry which replies to this suggestion-Would you throw up the reins of discipline? Would you leave the young to the mad career of their own passions and whimsies and call this

anarchy a respect for children's nature? We answer, Respect the children, respect them to the end, but also respect yourselves. Be the companions of their thoughts, the lovers of their virtue. Let them find us so true to our own selves, that they will be true to theirs."

My second principle, then, is be true to yourself Confront the children, as Sidney Harris suggests, with your own humanhood. By being exposed to a variety of adults, children and youth learn more about the possibilities of being human. This includes sharing your own faith and religious identity. Unitarian Universalism is not a normative religion. There is no one way of being Unitarian Universalist, and children benefit from being exposed to a multiplicity of perspectives. What is important is that we embody our faith, that we are example to children and youth of what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. And when you talk with children, speak from the heart; answer for yourself as a living, breathing Unitarian Universalist, and not as a spokesperson for an official Unitarian Universalist point-of-view.

My third principle is promote community. One of the basic rights of children, recognized by the United Nations, is the right to a religious identity. We all experience a need to belong and to be accepted. A good community, in the words of TV's Mr. Rogers, "likes you just the way you are." A good community leaves no child behind--not the shy, the handicapped, the infrequent attendee, not even the disruptive or the hard-to-reach. It is in community, when we gather together in a special place, that our faith and values take on a visible shape, where our Unitarian Universalist principles are promoted and reinforced. And, truth be told, in providing a place for children and youth, we are developing a valuable sense of community for ourselves, too.

My fourth principle is make it sacred. As a minister of religious education I am painfully aware of how difficult it is to be spiritual amidst the welter of activities in the RE wing on Sunday mornings. Nevertheless, the primary reason people come to churches and bring their children is to develop a spiritual life. Spirituality has many facets, of course, including social outreach and teaching in the church school. But whatever we do as teachers, consultants and committee members needs to be performed in light of our Unitarian Universalist principles and with the intention of touching inward springs, as Channing

suggests. This is why worship is so important, not only in the Chapel and the Worship Hall, but in the classroom as well.

My fifth principle is cultivate your soul. As much as children and youth need a spiritual life, teachers need one, too. We all lead busy, stressful lives, juggling jobs, personal needs and family obligations. But, the fact is, we can only give out of a fullness of the soul, never out of an emptiness. To be effective teachers we need to awaken and excite our slumbering souls, to rediscover a sense of wonder. As Dag Hammarskjold once said, "We die on the day when our lives cease to be illuminated by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder, the source of which is beyond reason." The good news is that the children, according to Swiss psychologist Alice Miller, are "messengers from a world we once deeply knew, but have long since forgotten." As we walk the spiritual path with them, they help us to remember.

My sixth principle is grow in your faith. Embrace your own spiritual identity as a Unitarian Universalist. Discover the richness of your religious history and heritage. By immersing yourself in your faith you will find that you will grow, as your children have done, by a process of enlargement, leading to new vistas of understanding and appreciation. There are many opportunities for growth as a Unitarian Universalist. There are district retreats, summer conferences, Renaissance Modules, the annual General Assembly, and workshops and classes in local congregations. And, of course, there are many books you might wish to read as well.

My seventh and last principle is put down roots. Thomas Jefferson once said that he was content to be a Unitarian by himself. If we all felt that way, Unitarian Universalism would be a one-generation phenomenon. If we feel grateful for the fact that this congregation was here for us when we needed it, we must take responsibility for making it a sanctuary for others. Our work as religious educators is a vital part of the life of the congregation as a whole, and what we do for children and youth cannot be done in isolation. Therefore, I would urge all of you to take an active interest in the affairs of the congregation—its meetings, committees, and fund-raising efforts. Get involved in the issues facing your

congregation. Make your voice heard, and be an advocate for the needs of the children and youth.

The reason why I love my work as a religious educator is that in the course of a few short years I can see the results of my efforts coming to fruition right in front of me. I witness the wide-eyed innocence of the very young and the growing self-assurance of youth. Working with children and youth renews my sense of wonder and hope. And I am a better Unitarian Universalist for what they have taught me. It may be heresy to say so, but I could exist without the church. So could our children. But I do not come here just to exist; I come here to find out what it means to be a spiritual person. And the children have taught me as much about this as anyone.

Handout 12

Teaching in Faith: Providing Tools to Support and Sustain Volunteers

By Tracey L. Hurd, Ph.D.

One of the best ways to affirm our ministry with children and youth is to illuminate the complex and wonderful ways that teaching in a religious education program, is a faith development experience for those teaching. Working with children and youth, teacher-leader-facilitators grow in faith and in community. While some find teaching to be a spiritually moving and nourishing practice, others need tools to frame this view.

How can we help shape the process of working in our UU religious education programs, with a lens of lifespan faith development? There are many ways. The UUA survey of religious educators, conducted in the fall of 2004, revealed that congregations are using many innovative methods to support and sustain teachers, by nurturing the ministry of working with children and youth. Many religious educators feel torn between needing to provide pragmatic assistance (curriculum, supplies, information about programs) and wanting to provide prophetic program leadership that highlights teaching as a rewarding faith development experience. In the survey, some religious educators said that they simply didn't do enough. But the many small and sure steps being taken, present a firm foundation our future. In our ministry with children and youth, we grow in faith as individuals and as a community.

We can provide tools that illuminate teaching as a nourishing practice of faith development. Here are some things we can do:

Frame the experience of teaching or leading as a faith development experience.

- Make teaching mission centered. What do we want our children and youth to know by heart? What is the mission of this program? These are big questions for any faith development program. And they are linked to the congregational question of, "Why do we gather here?" If we approach teaching/leading our children and youth from a mission-centered perspective, we are more likely to stay true to the premise that all participants, teacher/leaders and children/youth, UUA Renaissance Module: Teacher Development, Handouts and Appendices — 28

are learning, growing, connecting, and exploring together. We are more likely to think first about what makes being together in a religious setting unique. And we are more likely to lead with our hearts.

- Claim religious hospitality as an important aspect of faith development programs. Hospitality includes welcoming the stranger, in any form. The stranger can be a person new to the congregation. But the “stranger” can also be within—it can be an aspect or a new part of us that we have yet to realize. As we learn and grow, whether we are old or young, we can use the skills of hospitality to welcome the stranger within. We can replace fear with love and stand more ready to transform and nurture our souls. We practice hospitality with others, and become more ready to summon that lens to others, including ourselves.
- Intentionally include teacher faith development into the plans for religious education. State the premise that teaching is a means of spiritual and faith development in orientation meetings and/or materials. Emphasize growing together in faith as a shared goal for teacher/leaders and the children/youth participating in the program.
- Provide a simple rubric that leads volunteer teachers to deepen their experience. Help them see how the connections made to each other in a religious setting are a critical part of the “curriculum” and mission of the faith development program. One religious educator poses the following questions, to both frame and evaluate the program/session, for those teaching in her religious education program:
 - o To what extent has this teaching experience deepened your relationship with one or more child/youth?
 - o To what extent has this teaching experience deepened your relationship with one or more other adult?
 - o To what extent has this teaching experience deepened your sense of belonging to this community?
 - o To what extent has this teaching experience given you new knowledge or insights about your faith?

Support volunteers by providing tools through which they can illuminate their teaching as a faith development experience.

- Provide experiences that affirm that teachers in religious education programs engage in “doing faith” with participants including training on classroom tools such as chalice lightings, the sharing of joys and concerns, meditation, and for some congregations, prayer. Teachers who feel prepared to lead children/youth with these tools of our faith, will be more likely to “own” them, make personal meaning of them, and explore them with children/youth.
- Engage volunteer teachers more fully in ministry by providing additional materials and/or sources they can access to prepare for teaching. One religious educator provides three centering questions for teachers for each session. These questions point out the “big picture” of the session, both for the children and leaders participating.
- Some religious educators send letters to parent/guardians that apprise them of what’s happening in religious education. This helps create community connections for volunteer teachers with the parents of the children/youth in their care.
- Offer forums that nurture connections between teachers, where they can reflect together on their teaching/leading in relationship to their faith development. Many religious educators follow up with individual teachers via email. Others engage teachers in Small Group Ministry, just for teachers, where growing in faith through ministry to children/youth are a focus. Still other religious educators provide monthly breakfasts where volunteers connect to each other. All of these forums are opportunities to support and illuminate teaching as a venue for adult faith development.
- Provision teachers (materials, programs, information about child and youth development, health and safety procedures, group management advice) so that they feel prepared to focus on the process of being in relationship with the children/youth they teach over “coverage.”

Sustain teachers by enfolding them as integral members in the ministry of lifespan faith development.

- Claim and emphasize teaching children and youth as a central part of congregational ministry and congregational life.
- Provide ways for experienced teachers to nurture less experienced teachers. Pat Ellenwood, DRE, Wellesley Hills Unitarian Society, engages experienced teachers to be “Team Support” for newer volunteer teachers. This process of mutually enriching to new and seasoned teacher/leaders.
- Provide ways for volunteer teachers/leaders to influence programming. solicit feedback from teachers on an ongoing basis. Making teachers’ experiences and reflections part of the cycle of lifespan faith programming decisions, affirms their centrality to the relational process of growing in faith.
- Reflect together, during planned and informal venues, on what we learn spiritually, ethically, morally, and religiously in our work with children and youth. Together we grow in faith.

Handout 13

Channing on Teachers

Many Unitarian Universalists are familiar with the responsive reading by William Ellery Channing called “The Great End in Religious Instruction” (Reading 652 in Singing the Living Tradition). This reading came from Channing’s “Sunday School Address” and these excerpts from the full text include Channing’s expectations about the role of teachers (note that this is original language, not gender-inclusive).

The danger of mechanical teaching, by which the young mind becomes worn, deadened to the greatest truths. The Gospels, life-giving as they are, may be rendered wholly inoperative by the want of life in the instructor. **So great is my dread of tame, mechanical teaching, that I am sometimes almost tempted to question the utility of Sunday-schools.** The first aim will be to fix the attention of the pupil...the teacher must aim to secure it (attention) by a moral influence over the youthful mind. As the first means of establishing influence over the young, I would say, **you must love them.**

To awaken in the young an interest in what you teach, you must take an interest in it yourselves. You must not only understand, but feel, the truth. Your manner must have the natural animation which always accompanies a work into which our hearts enter. Speak to them (children) in the **familiar, simple language of common life**, and if the lesson have difficult terms, define them.

Teach much by questions. These stimulate, stir up the young mind, and make it its own teacher. They encourage the spirit of inquiry, the habit of thought. Questions, skillfully proposed, turn the child to his own consciousness and experience, and will often draw out from his own soul the truth which you wish to impart; and no lesson is so well learned as that which a man or a child teaches himself.

Cultivate the power of description. A story well told, and in which the most important particulars are brought out in a strong light, not only fixes attention, but often carries a truth farthest into the soul.

Carry a cheerful spirit into religious teaching.

Like all schools, the Sunday-school must owe its influence to its teachers. I would, therefore, close this discourse with saying that **the most gifted in our congregation cannot find a worthier field of labor than the Sunday-school. The noblest work on earth is to act with an elevating power on a human spirit.** The greatest men of past times have not been politicians or warriors, who have influenced the outward policy or grandeur of kingdoms; but men who, by their deep wisdom and generous sentiments, have given light and life to the minds and hearts of their own age, and left a legacy of truth and virtue to posterity.

His work, if he succeed, will outlive empires and the stars.

Full text of address:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=cl8PAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA447&lpg=PA447&dq=channing+sunday+school&source=bl&ots=bHyawq9YBc&sig=VNFue4fkA188M9fdcAT1GvE77zE&hl=en&sa=X&ei=4kDwUMr8NeOsigLy2YGABQ&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=channing%20sunday%20school&f=false>

Handout 14

The Care and Feeding of Volunteers: Part One

By Judith A. Frediani

First, it is important to bring adaptive leadership to this situation, not look for a tactical fix. We all know that the era of stay---at---home moms with time on their hands is gone. (It was always part myth anyway.) We need to stop bemoaning the 1950s, let go of that model, and take new approaches. But even busy people have time and energy for what they value. It is a challenge, but I see many congregations meeting it successfully. I am sure there are successes in your group, and those are what you can focus on and share. If your congregation is chronically struggling to recruit teachers, a culture change may be needed, and that will take time, but it can be done.

Here are some components of successful volunteer recruitment you can discuss in small groups and then share in the large group.

Recruitment

Who do you want to teach? Don't put out a call for volunteers. Decide who you want and ask them. Pair people you think would be great together and ask them to teach together. They are more likely to say yes when asked to be part of a team that is attractive to them. They feel a certain obligation to the others and they benefit from the friendships they develop. When I was a DRE, the RE Committee and I had a telethon one evening calling our ideal teachers. It was enormously effective. We had a big chart of all the teaching positions and potential teachers. We also had other jobs ready to offer recruits who declined to teach. They were happy to take these other responsibilities. Don't rule out whole categories of people (newer members, seniors, parents of young children, older teens, men...); let personal qualities and interests be determinative, not life stage.

What are your expectations for teachers? Don't just ask people to teach (that can be an intimidating question), ask them to be part of a team to teach program "X", "Y" number of times a month for "Z" months, or whatever. Make it clear they will be part of a team of rotating teachers who can cover for anyone who will be away. Make the commitment manageable so they can go to worship some of the time (assuming RE and worship are at

the same time). Approach recruitment with the knowledge that teaching our children and youth is an honor, and one in which they will gain at least as much as they give. Communicate this in different ways throughout the year.

Remember:

Strategies for Recruitment of Volunteers

Face to Face

- Know the person
- Fit the person to the role.
- Assure them that volunteering is a both a religious and spiritual activity
- Be clear and specific about what you are asking them to do
- Be prepared to accept “no”
- Make clear that there are safety policies around screening volunteers
- Final staffing by the religious education professional

Recruitment Campaign

- Use a specific theme and a time limited process
- Communicate the vision for and importance of faith development
- Convey “There is no ‘they’”
- Publicize the support and recognition provided for volunteers.
- Newsletter and special publications
- Use the pulpit for “witnessing” by volunteers
- Establish team teaching whenever possible
- Enlist the minister in providing a message from the pulpit
- Too large a task for one person

Handout 15

Tips for Successful Recruiting

Adapted from materials prepared by the UU Church of Ventura, CA

Increasing the Likelihood of Success

The primary pay for a volunteer is the satisfaction they get from seeing that the institution and/or event they care for does well. In a profound way, that institution/event is part of the volunteer's identity. Frustration comes when they are asked to work without enough time, or support, or recognition, or when the task is poorly organized so that failure is more likely than success. No volunteer should be asked to do something that is likely to be unsuccessful or too demanding. The frustration may not only doom this task, but also lead the volunteer to refuse the next time they are asked to do something.

The leader's task is to be sure the task is sized correctly, and is a good match for the volunteer, and to see that volunteers are in the right places, doing tasks for which they are being rewarded. The leader needs to know what they are asking, in order to tell the volunteer:

- what the task entails,
- how long it will take,
- what support will be available,
- what results are expected,
- why the task is important,
- why the volunteer is the person being asked.

No one should be asked to do a task without this information, and no one should be told that the task is less than it is. Credibility is all-important.

Volunteers always do better when they have precise and complete information on what is expected of them. The primary responsibility of a leader of volunteers is the organization of the environment and of support systems, which are crucial to success.

Rewards are usually in the form of pats on the back and "thank you's." Volunteers should receive these rewards frequently and publicly. Calling volunteers periodically to thank them is critical—the more specific the thanks, the better.

When a volunteer doesn't function as expected, the leader needs to call to see if more support is needed. Sometimes people take on tasks they can't accomplish, at least not in

the time frame provided. If deadlines can be pushed back a little, leaving time for the work to be done, the payoff is greater than if a task is removed from a volunteer.

Removing a Volunteer from a Task, or a Task from a Volunteer

If the volunteer and the task are mismatched, it may be necessary to remove a task from a volunteer. This is often difficult for the leader and for the volunteer. Honesty is usually the best approach. The volunteer knows whether they are getting the work done, and is not likely to be fooled by flowery language or misinformation. The need is to be sensitive to the volunteer's feelings, and to listen to her/his solution to the problem. If they come up with a plan that can be monitored and gives promise of success, stay with that person. If they can be helped to see that it would be better for someone else to do the job, encourage the volunteer to say so, and see if there is something else that would work out better for this volunteer.

Handout 16

Recruitment Skits

1. Dr. Seuss Skit — A Parody

Speaker 1:

Would you like to teach UUs --- Tell me, tell me which you'd choose
Would you like fifth grade or the first? Choosing none would be the worst

Speaker 2:

*I would not, could not teach UUs --- That is not something I would choose
I can't imagine where I'd start --- I've no great knowledge to impart*

S1: Could you, would you with a guide? You'll have [DRE] there at your side
And they'll provide curriculum --- So you'll look smart instead of dumb

*S2: Well, possibly if there's a guide --- And if [DRE] will be at my side And they'll provide
curriculum --- So I look smart instead of dumb
But would she stay in class with me? Just think how nervous I would be*

S1: Would you, could you if you thought --- You'd have some help each time you taught?
We teach in teams here at our church --- So you will not be in a lurch

*S2: Well, I could do it if I thought --- That I'd have help each time I taught
I know that I should volunteer --- And I should overcome my fear*

S1: Would you like it if I say --- That you will come to church one day
A smiling kid will wave and that --- you'll be the one she's waving at?
You'll connect with parents, too --- And learn what's what and who's with who
They'll thank you for the job you did --- In working hard to teach their kid
And if those reasons aren't ideal --- Here is one that could appeal:
When you teach you just might find --- Your own beliefs get more refined

S2: It might be fun if like you say --- Kids wave at me at church some day

*And I connect with parents while --- Refining my believing style
But in my real life I don't teach --- Won't these kids be hard to reach?*

S1: Would you, could you if you knew --- About the kids who'll be with you?
They value interest over skill --- They look for patience, heart and will
They just want folks who'll help them learn --- Sign up, sign up and take your turn

*S2: Alright, if you will let me be --- I'll sign up now and then we'll see.....
Say... I like this teaching stuff --- I don't think I can get enough
Sign me up to teach some more --- I should have done this years before
The kids are bright and learn so well --- This teaching job is really swell
And everything you said is true --- I've met some kids and parents, too
I do so like to teach UUs --- I am so glad you helped me choose*

2. How Do You Solve a Problem Like Recruitment?

Parody of the song “How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?” from *The Sound of Music*

We are worried and confused, out of focus and bemused
and we don't know what will happen to our youth

will it wither, will it die, save our classrooms, hear our cry
bring us teachers, bring us teachers, it's the truth

we are friendly, we are nice give good service and advice
and we hardly ever work them to the bone. Children need them

Yes they do

we have faith that they'll pull through is it hopeless?

Let us pray! What shall we do?

How do we solve a problem like recruitment? how do make those teachers volunteer?

How do we solve a problem like recruitment? a snap of the finger?

A ticket to heaven? A tear?

Many a thing you know the children give them Many a time the children make them smile.

So how will they understand, the future is in their hands?

How do we make those teachers volunteer? Oh, How do we solve a problem like
recruitment? How do we get some teachers here next year?

Handout 17

Safety, Health, and Ethics in Congregations

By Tracey L. Hurd, Ph.D.

The health and well-being of every member of a congregation depends on the development and maintenance of the intentionally safe and healthy congregation. We cannot respect and affirm the inherent worth and dignity of all beings when we do not feel safe. The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations provides comprehensive on-line resources to support healthy and safe congregations. Questions frequently asked by those working in lifespan religious education are listed with resources, sample forms, and step-by-step guides to support safe congregational communities.

Frequently Asked Questions about Health in Congregations

What can I do to create a congregational environment that is healthy and safe?

Provide information and procedures to minimize health and safety risks.

Customize forms and procedures provided on links to suit your congregation.

See <http://www.uua.org/safe> for forms and sample procedures.

In the event that a child or youth is injured, what do I do?

Treat the child; inform the DRE and family; record for congregation files what occurred including treatment; and follow up with child/youth/family as needed.

Complete an Incident Report Form.

Frequently Asked Questions about Safe Congregations

Is there one Comprehensive Safe Congregation Resource?

There are two important resources:

The Safe Congregation Handbook, <http://www.uua.org/safe/handbook>

Balancing Acts: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations, by Rev. Debra W. Haffner, <http://www.uua.org/documents/haffnerdebra/balancingact.pdf>

What can I do to keep children and youth safe?

<http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/congregationalhandbook/34764.shtml>

Covenant to define adults' responsibility to the children and youth

Develop and implement congregational policies with responsible staffing

<http://www.uua.org/leaders/safecongregations/responsiblestaffing/index.shtml>

Contact safecongregations@uua.org for support around Safe Congregation issues.

Handout 18

Code of Ethics Sample

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurture, care, and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

The relationship between young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential is to be realized. There are no more important areas of growth than those of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. Wisdom dictates that children, youth, and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; therefore, leaders will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive, or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth which constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.

Leaders shall be informed of the code of ethics and agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

RE Volunteer's Statement:

I have read and understand the above statements of position, expectations, and actions.

Date

Name (printed)

Name (signed)

Thank you for being a volunteer in our congregation's school program. Please read and sign this contract (filling in where necessary), and read and sign the code of ethics on the back.

Handout 19

Sample Health and Safety Guidelines, University Unitarian Church

At UUC we are concerned with your child's health and safety as well as your child's spirituality and religious education. Children and Youth Programs (CYP) sets up health and safety guidelines for the church school to insure that UUC is a safe and healthy place for all children and youth. Please become familiar with the following guidelines for the church school.

Classroom Drop-off and Pickup

Drop-off for church school begins at 10 minutes prior to the church service. We ask that parents let their child's teacher know that their child is ready to attend class and that the care and responsibility for the child will be shifted to the teacher.

Parents are to pick up their children in grades 3 and under by 10:45am for the first service and 12:30pm for the second service. Only children in the 4th grade and above are allowed to leave the classroom by themselves after church school. Children not picked up by 10:45 and 12:30 will be taken to the Church School office to wait for their parents.

Snacks

Snacks at church school are not meant to be either a meal or a dessert. Crackers and/or fruits and veggies are preferred. Please let church school teachers know of any food allergies or special dietary needs your child has. All food allergies or food not tolerated by your child will be posted in your child's classroom.

Medical Alerts

We ask that parents whose children are on specific medications or have medical conditions alert their child's teachers to their child's special needs as they see fit. Please fill out the Medical Alert Form in your child's classroom and it will be posted.

Infant Room

The church school does not provide snacks for the Infant Room. Please let the Infant Room caregivers know if you bring a bottle or other snack for your infant.

Guidelines for Children Under Age 4

Children under age 4 do well with crackers, dry cereal mixes, soft fruits, and small finger food items. The young toddlers are still learning to use a cup and spills with paper cups are frequent and messy. Therefore, we do not recommend bringing juice for Toddler I and II classes as cleanup is sticky. Water in cups will be provided for these classes. Bottles are fine for all toddlers as long as they are labeled.

Please do not bring the following food items to church school for children ages 3 and under, since they could cause choking: nuts, grapes, raisins, dried fruits, apple slices, hard candy, or popcorn. We also ask that toddlers not bring toys with small pieces or coins to the classroom.

Building Safety

A first aid kit is available in the church school office. An escape plan and location of the fire extinguisher are posted near each classroom door. A review of first aid skills and fire escape plans is part of teacher training. The church school conducts Sunday morning fire drills on the first Sunday in October. A list of CPR trained adults is posted in the church school office.

Playground

Children of all ages enjoy the playground equipment and several classes may be on the playground during fair weather. Children of all ages **MUST** be supervised by an adult on the playground. This supervision includes the time before and after services. Parents are responsible for supervising their children on the playground after they pick them up from church school.

Illness

Please do not bring children to church school with fever, flu, or communicable illness such as chicken pox, conjunctivitis, etc.

Field Trips

Parents need to sign permission slips when children are leaving the church premises. The destination and expected time of return will be posted in the church school office. The leaders will carry a list of names, emergency contacts, and medical conditions with them at all times. There will be a minimum of two adults with the groups that use vehicles. All drivers must be covered by car insurance. Children 4 and under must be in appropriate car seats and all passengers must wear a seat belt. If a driver is under 21, children may ride only with written permission of a parent or guardian.

Child Protection Safety

A minimum of two adults will be present in the building during youth group meetings and at other events involving children and youth of the church. If a teacher or youth group leader suspects or is made aware of child abuse or has a concern about a child's safety and wellbeing, this information will be reported to the Minister of Religious Education as soon as possible.

There must be no use of alcohol or illegal drugs at events involving the children or youth groups.

Handout 20

Faith Development Outline

By Tracey L. Hurd, Ph.D. Based on the work of James Fowler.

Held in the Love of Others: The Basis for Later Faith

Infants and Toddlers: Undifferentiated Faith

- Infants are born with potential but without the ability to act on it.
- Experiences of trust become the basis for emerging notions of faith.
- Trust plants the seeds of hope.
- Pre-Images of others, images formed without language and labels envelope the infant in care. These early relationships are imbued with spirituality.

Faith by Imitation

Preschool Children: Intuitive-Projective Faith

- Faith development is linked to cognitive and social development.
- Knowing what we do as people of faith, nurtures a sense of belonging.
- Imitating routines or rituals of religion, the child learns them first as things to do and later as part of a more complex picture.
- Child sees spirituality in everyday life; they is open to “big questions.”
- Experiences of love with others, gets projected more broadly to the faith community.

Young School-Age Children: Intuitive-Projective Faith

- Interest in big questions becomes tempered by beginning knowledge of the literal world.
- Participating in religious activities becomes another building block of “knowing” or authority.
- Children “do” religion as a way of owning religion.
- Jean Grasso Fitzpatrick says the seven year old, spiritually speaking, is like a person from Missouri, “Show me,” she demands.
- Inviting young school age children into the life of the faith community lets them know what it is like to have faith.

Joining in Faith

School-Age Children: Mythic-Literal Faith

- Concrete operational thinking—logic of action and an ability to hold actions as mental representations—influences faith development.
- Literal understandings of faith prevail.
- Children develop “myths” or story-like ideas based on logic about big questions.
- Holidays, rituals, community service all become satisfying ways to both “do faith” and “claim faith.”

Discernment

Young Adolescents: Synthetic Conventional Faith

- Belongingness—as an individual-- becomes important to a sense of faith.
- Many young adolescents are drawn to religion as they try to make sense and meaning of their lives with newly developed capacities to think about thinking.
- Young adolescents want to find coherence, to put together pictures or concepts of how things work. Some may be drawn to the clarity of creed-based religions.
- Sustained involvement in a congregation can provide comfort and coherence that answers a yearning to matter, to feel unique, and to feel a part of something bigger.
- Engaging adolescents in the life of the congregation and marking their presence (through recognitions, coming of age ceremonies, and involvement) may help make faith alive for youth.

Middle Adolescents: Synthetic Conventional Faith

- Interest in faith can often increase or decrease during these years.
- If faith offers them a sense of coherence, purpose, and meaning then they will be more drawn towards it.
- Faith becomes a base for synthesizing values.
- Religion, however, is still often seen as holding outside authority.
- Questioning of faith can lead an adolescent to hold tighter or to abandon faith during these years.

- Providing meaningful faith-based activities nurtures adolescents spiritual agency and may draw them deeper into faith.

Deeper Understanding, Reflection

Older Adolescents and Young Adults: Individuative Reflective Faith

- Existential thinking and the promise and pressures of becoming adults can help late adolescents explore faith more deeply or abandon their faith.
- No longer trying to belong to faith, the young adult seeks to construct her/his own understanding of it, through crucial reflection, questioning and participating.
- Young adults are supported by knowing that faith offers more than psychological reasoning, but a way of being spiritually connected beyond words and thinking
- Engaging young adults in spiritually satisfying service, worship and spiritual practice can help them deepen their sense of faith.

Handout 21

Abbreviated Summary: Child Development

Adapted from *Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook* written by Dr. Tracey L. Hurd published by the UUA

	Preschool Child	Early School-Age Child	School-Age Child
Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body is acquiring gross and fine motor skills • Learns through physical experiences • Needs sensory and tactile experiences • Doesn't have link between thinking and action refined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starts coordinating motor skills (rides bike, games) • Uses tools for drawing, writing • Very active; needs physical challenges • Learns through doing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine and gross motor skills almost fully developed • Central nervous system primarily fully developed • Needs food, rest, exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May enter puberty • Is a top consumer of media images of bodies, ideals, wellness
Cognitive, Intellectual Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self is primary reference point: "egocentric" • Obtains Object Permanence • Categorizes & classifies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dichotomizes • Appearance = reality • Fluid between fantasy & reality • Needs to problem solve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starts to understand the notion of "Conservation" • Interested in numbers, letters, words, facts • Self is still primary reference point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys being "correct" • Learns best in the "zone of proximal development" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages in logical thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops hierarchical reasoning • Concrete Operational thinking—based on non-abstract "pieces" • Develops specific learning styles; learning disabilities may become more clear
Social, Affective Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social circle of family is primary reference points • Has not acquired race or gender constancy • Starting to learn notion of "friend" • Empathic, but centered on self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learns through social interaction • Enjoys peers and working together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has beginning "true" friendships • Often rigid is thinking about gender, race, roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peers and friendships are important • Identities navigated through social relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes perspectives of others • May segregate based on gender, racial, ethnic identities
Moral Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Categorizes right and wrong- sometimes too rigidly • Needs support linking words to actions & moral issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends to order and authority; uses rules • Develops a sense of industriousness • Starts to understand motive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses "Golden Rule" • Interested in fairness, justice and care • Aware of moral issues & interesting in helping
Spiritual, Religious, Faith Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learns about religion and faith through experience • Receptive to spirituality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not afraid of "big questions"—full of wonder • Fowler's Intuitive Projective stage of faith development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does religion to know religion • Latter part of Fowler's Intuitive Project stage of faith development • Needs to have rigidities, and "correct" answers gently challenged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys membership in faith or denominational communities • "Does" religion & spirituality • Enters Fowler's Mythical Literal stage of faith

Handout 22

Abbreviated Summary: Adolescent Development

Adapted from Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook written by Dr. Tracey L. Hurd, published by the UUA

	Early Adolescence	Middle Adolescence	Late Adolescence
Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitions into adult body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eats and sleeps more • Demonstrates or does not demonstrate behaviors that may indicate risk for eating disorders or depression • Seeks support for self-esteem and body image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops sexuality more fully; feelings of gendered attraction and sexual orientation are often central <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigates greater risks relating to alcohol, drug use, sexual activity • Peak physical growth stage for male youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieves full physical development • Gains more assurance about body image • Engages in sexual activity; more likely to be partnered • Learns to manage stress and maintain health
Cognitive, Intellectual Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrates on self and other's perceptions of self • Engages an "imaginary audience," a mental idea of others watching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particular intelligence strengths become evident (linguistic, mathematical, interpersonal, musical, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the ability to think deductively, inductively, conceptually, hypothetically • Engage in practices to celebrate new mindfulness about self (journal writing, re-reading emails, etc.) • Become more critical of the world around them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particularly open to learning; a time ripe for formal / informal education • Expresses ideas with more linguistic skill • Sees many points of view and may claim multiple realities as the truth
Social, Affective Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social relationships with peers are very important <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learns social scripts (embedded in the contexts of race, ethnicity, and class) about what it means to be a sexual person • Expresses criticism of self and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tries to claim an identity/ies • Needs to belong and have a sense of self-worth • Struggles with gender and sexual identity – often a time of increased stress for LGBTQ and questioning youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases self-reliance • Develops sense of identity and intimacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses interest in vocational and personal life choices • Brings to realization sexual identity of self
Moral Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates interest in ethics of care and justice • Respects social order, although sometimes challenges it as well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinks conceptually and enjoys moral reasoning • Engages in "principled morality" – principles are more important than laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrestles with personal morality and life choices • Expresses interest in moral and philosophical thinking, for self and wider world
Spiritual, Religious, Faith Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys presence or absence of religious creed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses interest in religion that embodies one's values • Sustains faith development by engaging with a community that allows questioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptualizes religion as an outside authority that can be questioned • Questions faith, leading to deeper ownership or disenfranchising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepens religious or spiritual identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims authority around issues of faith • Further develops spirituality as an important part of self • Engages in "faith" beyond traditional organized religion

Handout 23

Howard Gardner on Multiple Intelligences

The intelligences that have been recognized by Howard Gardner:

Intrapersonal

Interpersonal

Logical---Mathematical

Naturalist

Spatial

Bodily---Kinesthetic

Linguistic

Musical

(He has considered Existential but has not added it to his list.)

Writing in the *Washington Post* in October 2013, Gardner said:

As an educator, I draw three primary lessons for educators:

Individualize your teaching as much as possible. Instead of “one size fits all,” learn as much as you can about each student, and teach each person in ways that they find comfortable and learn effectively. Of course this is easier to accomplish with smaller classes. But ‘apps’ make it possible to individualize for everyone.

Pluralize your teaching. Teach important materials in several ways, not just one (e.g. through stories, works of art, diagrams, role play). In this way you can reach students who learn in different ways. Also, by presenting materials in various ways, you convey what it means to understand something well. If you can only teach in one way, your own understanding is likely to be thin.

Drop the term “styles.” It will confuse others and it won’t help either you or your students.

About “styles,” Gardner says in the same article that a style is a “hypothesis of how an individual approaches the range of materials.” He does not equate these with “intelligences.”

See the website www.multipleintelligencesoasis.org for ongoing information about multiple intelligences.

Handout 24

Seven Ways Congregations Can Embrace People with Disabilities

By David Briggs; accessed 7/28/14 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-briggs/7-ways-congregations-can_b_5582650.html?&ncid=tweetInkushpmg00000055

A 4-year-old with impaired vision is not allowed in the toddler class in church, but is forced to remain in the nursery.

The mother of an elementary school child with dwarfing syndrome is told her church cannot provide a stool to allow her daughter to reach the bathroom sink because it would be an insurance risk.

A minister refuses to visit a family's home because their teen with autism makes him feel uncomfortable.

The larger society may be moving forward in its understanding and inclusion of people with disabilities. But the above [stories reported in a study of more than 400 parents of children with special needs](#) illustrates how far behind many religious congregations are in this effort. Just 43 percent of the 416 parents surveyed described their religious community as "supportive," researchers from the University of Kentucky and Vanderbilt University found.

Almost a third of parents reported having [changed their place of worship](#) because their child had not been included or welcomed. More than half kept their sons or daughters from participating in a religious activity because of a lack of support.

The lack of inclusion is of special concern because faith communities help develop supportive social networks and provide hope and optimism in challenging situations. And those functions appear to be particularly beneficial to people with disabilities and their loved ones.

For example, the more frequently children with special needs attended religious services, the higher parents rated their family lives together, sociologist Andrew Whitehead of Clemson University found in analyzing data from the 2011-2012 National Study of Children's Health.

Those positive outcomes included being better able to cope with the day-to-day demands of raising children with special needs.

So how can churches, mosques and synagogues include the faithful who are disabled?

Below are seven areas researchers have identified:

Communication: Adults with disabilities and parents of children with special needs have to be able to speak to a resource person in the congregation to let them know what is required for their participation, and to learn how they can work together with the community toward full inclusion. And they need to know their needs -- whether it is related to hearing impairment or autism -- will be heard, Whitehead said. In the survey of parents of children with disabilities, more than half the parents said they had never been asked about the best way to include their daughter or son in religious activities.

Accessibility: A basic requirement is that congregations accommodate the physical needs of individuals, whether providing handicapped access or amplified audio or sign language for those with hearing needs.

Support: Including the disabled in congregational life goes beyond adding a new sound system or a wheelchair ramp. For example, people with autism or Down syndrome may need special assistance such as an aide or a peer assistant to participate in religious education classes and Vacation Bible Schools. Offering worship alternatives such as a shorter service with contemporary music also may allow for greater participation for individuals with attention deficit issues. Having a congregational resource person trained in disability issues is a huge plus.

Leadership: Faith communities where leaders are committed to including people with disabilities [were more welcoming, offered greater opportunities for people with disabilities to share their gifts and were more physically accessible](#), according to a primarily Web-based survey of 160 respondents conducted by Vanderbilt University researchers.

Participation: Inviting people with disabilities to serve on boards and committees and to take visible roles in congregational life -- from greeters to readers to worship planners -- is an important sign they are valued members of the community. Building inclusive communities "is not just about welcoming people with disabilities, but truly including them and respecting what they have to contribute to the community," said Megan Griffin, lead researcher in the Vanderbilt study.

Education: Congregations that educate their members on disability issues and work together with disability-related organizations are also more welcoming and better able to integrate people with special needs into the life of the community, studies find.

Love: The attitudes of fellow congregants may be the most critical factor in whether a religious community is inclusive. In studies, parents of children with special needs who experienced love and acceptance reported their congregations were sources of great strength and support. In cases where disapproval or censure replaces love, however, the results can be devastating for both people with special needs and their families, the research indicates. Some may even abandon their spiritual home or even their faith. Such disapproval "basically just sends a message you're not wanted here," said Whitehead, a former director of the U.S. Congregational Life Survey. "It just makes you feel worthless, that it would be better if you weren't there."

The good news is that just about any congregation can serve the disabled.

The Vanderbilt study found that factors such as congregation size, the number of people with disabilities or its location in an urban, suburban or rural setting did not make a significant difference.

"That's really an empowering sort of message," Griffin said. "Ultimately, faith leaders can promote the inclusion of people with disabilities."

David Briggs writes the [Ahead of the Trend](#) column for the [Association of Religion Data Archives](#).

Handout 25

Sample Referral Form for Individuals with Special Needs

Paint Branch Unitarian Universalist Church Religious Education Program (adapted)

Please complete the front side of this form and submit it to the Director of Religious Education, who will forward it, of necessary, to the Special Needs Liaison to the Religious Education Committee. You will be contacted soon to discuss possible options and program modifications. Thank you for your involvement in this process.

NAME OF CHILD:	
AGE:	CLASS/TEACHER (IF ENROLLED):
PERSON COMPLETING THIS FORM:	
RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD:	DATE:
PARENT/GUARDIAN:	TELEPHONE:

Please briefly describe your concerns and the special needs of the child, using specific examples wherever possible:

What suggestions do you have?

Individual Religious Education Plan
(to be completed by the planning team)

Brief statement of the child's strengths and needs:

Goals/objectives for participation in the RE program related to the child's special needs:

Strategies to be utilized:

Follow up notes:

Handout 26

The Children of Jowonio

By Mara Sapon-Shevin

Written for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Jowonio School, in Syracuse, NY. Jowonio (an Onondagan word that means “to set free”) was the first school in the country to systematically include children who were labeled as “autistic” in regular classrooms with “typical” children.

The children of Jowonio know – not because they have been told – but because they have lived it

That there is always room for everyone – in the circle and at snack time and on the playground – and even if they have to wiggle a little to get another body in and even if they have to find a new way to do it, they can figure it out – and so it might be reasonable to assume that there’s enough room for everyone in the world.

The children of Jowonio know – not because they have been told – but because they have lived it

That children come in a dazzling assortment of sizes, colors and shapes, big and little and all shades of brown and beige and pink, and some walk and some use wheelchairs but everyone gets around and that same is boring – and so it might be reasonable to assume that everyone in the world could be accepted for who they are

The children of Jowonio know – not because they have been told – but because they have lived it

That there are people who talk with their mouths and people who talk with their hands and people who talk by pointing and people who tell us all we need to know with their bodies if we only listen well – and so it might be reasonable to assume that all the people of the world could learn to talk to and listen to each other

The children of Jowonio know – not because they have been told – but because they have lived it

That we don't send people away because they're different or even because they're difficult, and that all people need support and that if people are hurting, we take the time to notice, and that words can build bridges and hugs can heal – and so it might be reasonable to assume that all the people on the planet could reach out to each other and heal the wounds and make a world fit for us all

From *Because We Can Change the World: A Practical Guide to Building Cooperative, Inclusive Classroom Communities*, by Mara Sapon-Shevin, 2nd edition, June 2010.

Used by permission.

Handout 27

The Paradoxes of Space

“When I design a classroom session,” says Parker Palmer, “I am aware of six paradoxical tensions that I want to build into the teaching and learning space. These six are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. They are simply mine, offered to illustrate how the principle of paradox might contribute to pedagogical design.”

The space should be bounded and open.

The space should be hospitable and “charged.”

The space should invite the voice of the individual and the voice of the group.

The space should honor the “little” stories of the students and the “big” stories of the disciplines and traditions.

The space should support solitude and surround it with the resources of the community.

The space should welcome both silence and speech.

(The Courage to Teach, 1998 p. 74)

Parker devotes several pages of the book to describe and explain these paradoxes. Further reading in Chapter III will be useful as we plan and prepare spaces for teaching and learning.

Handout 28

Creating an Environment of Acceptance and Mutuality

Adapted from Treasure Hunting – Take Two

By Gaia Brown, CRE/ML

It was a challenging group of 5th graders that Diane had to deal with. Yes, there was always a co-teacher, but there were 15 children, almost all of whom were boys, and five of those boys were taking medication (but not always on the weekend!) for ADHD. This morning had been particularly trying, and Diane was on her way down to my office to turn in her teacher report form and see if I had anything for her headache. When she was halfway down the hall, one of her young charges intercepted her. “Diane,” he said, “I guess we were kinda bad today. You might not have had a fun time, but we did.” And he gave her an awkward hug before dashing off. Just a few seconds later, when Diane crossed my threshold, she was beaming. She told me about what had just happened, and while it didn’t make the morning perfect, it made it very worthwhile for Diane.

When you sign on to teach in a Unitarian Universalist religious education program, you are opening yourself to the joy of forming relationships with young people and seeing them grow in your care. Your primary goal should be to create an atmosphere of acceptance and mutuality in the class room. The rest will follow.

I’m assuming you are teaching with a team — ideally at least four people. You are probably all incredibly busy, but if you can find at least ninety minutes, preferably two hours, to meet together before the program year starts, you will find it time well spent. Before you meet, try to read through the introduction to the curriculum you will be leading, along with at least two lessons, so that you have an understanding of what you hope will be happening each week.

Set Your Schedule

Before the meeting, ask your religious education professional to give you a schedule of when there will be R.E. classes this year. Then bring your personal calendar to this meeting so you know when you are available to teach or assist. Ask a team member with

computer skills to take everyone's blackout dates and come up with a schedule for at least the first half of the year. If possible, add the names of the curriculum sessions you will be using to the calendar for each week, so everyone is on the same page.

Decide on what chalice lighting or opening ritual you will use each week. (Stick to one for the year—children are incredible traditionalists.)

Discuss Discipline!

As with any team of people dealing with children, consistency is important. When teachers have different levels of tolerance for disturbing behavior, tensions can arise between them. Talk about it now!

Also decide who will deal with disruptive behavior. Generally it is best if the adult who is closest to the child, or the one who first sees the behavior, who says, "Kevin, those chopsticks are for your project, not for poking your neighbor. Do you need help getting started?" Particularly if a team member has her or his child in the class, it's important to clarify that it's okay for others to remind that child to keep the class covenant.

What's in a Name?

A first order decision is determining what the children will call you. If you get to May and third graders are still calling you "teacher" or preschoolers are just pulling on your pant leg, the year has not been a success. Here are some choices:

Mr. Johnson

Mr. J.

Mrs. Helen

Ms. Maggie

Bob

It's okay if teachers choose different styles. What is important is that you are comfortable with the name, because then the children will be too — if they know it. So wear your name tag every week. And if you are teaching non-readers, be sure to play name games and to use names of your co-teachers often, so the children hear them repeatedly.

Getting to Know the Children

It's nice if your religious education professional can provide you in advance with a class list. If you have advance registration, that information should let you know about children's special needs. If you don't, you might ask your religious education professional what they know about the children, or you might make up a form which you give to the parents. It is good to know:

- Allergies (if a child has allergies, note this on the class attendance sheet, so that each week when you take attendance you are reminded of them!)
- With whom the child lives
- Who is allowed to pick the child up from the classroom
- Special learning needs the child has (like difficulties with reading or processing information)
- If the child is on medication (and if that medication is discontinued on the weekend)
- Any other medical conditions
- Any family situation that might be of concern

Children with Different Abilities

If you will have a child with a sensory or mobility impairment, or one who has a developmental delay, arrange to meet with the parents and find out how you can best make the Sunday experience a successful one. You might give the parents a copy of the curriculum and ask them for suggestions so that each morning will be inclusive. Of course, you should also ask your religious educator for assistance.

Plan for Emergencies, Big and Small

Find out what policies your congregation has for small emergencies, like bathroom breaks for young children; and large ones, like a fire. If there are no policies, tell your religious educator or your R.E. Committee that you'd like some. But in the meantime, discuss with your team members how you will handle these situations. And speaking of policies:

Remember Safe Congregations!

No matter how small your group, it is never okay to have just one adult in the classroom. This is for the well-being of the teacher as well as the children. Misunderstandings can

arise; in those cases, it's good to have another adult present as a witness. And if there ever is an emergency, one person can attend to that while the other attends to the children.

If there is a Sunday when your co-teacher or assistant is unexpectedly absent, you might find a parent who is willing to step in for the morning. Usually parents are sympathetic to issues of child safety. If you can't find a last-minute sub, notify your religious education professional.

Discuss How You Will Foster a Welcoming Classroom

Adults who come to church and find that they have friends and a minister there who are interested in them and who care for their well-being are going to want to keep coming back.

Children respond the same way when they can look forward to finding caring peers and adults in their R.E. classes. Here are some things you can do to create an environment of acceptance and mutuality:

- Make sure everyone young and older in the classroom knows everyone else's name.
- When new children come, take time to get them integrated.
- Greet each child by name each week.
- Take attendance orally each week, naming the children who are absent, so that children will realize that when they are not there, they are missed.
- Learn the interests of the individual children, and ask about them.
- If a child seems to not have a friend in the class, try to find him or her a buddy.
- Be willing to share (within appropriate boundaries) the joys and pains of your own life
- with the children.
- Expect children to live up to the covenant they make for their class, and remind them gently when they fail to live up to it.
- Respect the children's time and attendance by being well prepared for the morning.

What other suggestions can you and your co-teachers think of?

Make a Covenant

Unitarian Universalism is a covenantal rather than a creedal faith. That means that we are united not in our beliefs but in our agreement of how we will be in relationship with each other. Early in the year your class should be making a covenant to remind themselves about how they will treat each other. You can do the same thing. You might take a few minutes to answer these questions:

- What are the gifts I bring to this ministry with children? Where do I feel I will need help in this ministry?
- What do I promise my co-teachers?
- What would I like my co-teachers to promise me?

Share your answers with each other. Then talk about what promises you want to make to each other. Write your covenant down. Say it together. Keep it in your hearts, and if conflicts arise, refer to it.

Handout 29

Discipline in Sunday School: What Would a UU Do?

By Abby L. W. Crowley, Ed D.

We believe in the right of every teacher and child to teach and learn in a safe, supportive and (relatively) distraction-free environment, thereby making the Sunday school experience a positive one for all concerned.

What do you get when you put 10 - 15 bright, talkative, enthusiastic and sometimes reluctant kids together in a room with two eager, but not professionally trained teachers for seventy-five minutes on a Sunday morning? Depending on the teachers, the kids, the content, the space and maybe even the weather or what the kids had for breakfast, the result can range from chaos to ecstasy. With training and support from the Religious Educator and the Religious Education Committee, we can increase the chances that the experience will be largely positive and keep teacher frustration and burnout to a minimum.

What follows are the seven principles of teaching in a Unitarian Universalist church school that can make classroom management and discipline reflective of our principles and can make Sunday school worth getting up early for.

Principle 1: Prepare, prepare, prepare.

Hopefully those responsible for selecting curriculum have done a good job and you have an age appropriate, experiential and interesting curriculum to work with. Become intimately familiar with your curriculum, perhaps getting it in the spring and having all summer to read it through. Make notes in the margins or with sticky notes of ideas you have, special materials or resources you will need and questions you have. Make adaptations and choices from among recommended activities based on what you know your class has responded positively or negatively to in the past. Each week, come early enough to have everything set up and ready to go for the entire session before the children come in. Confer with your assistant or co-teacher to be clear as to who will do what. If you see in advance that the children may need extra help on a project, line up a

few extra warm bodies for the morning. Advance preparation will eliminate many of the behavior problems that occur in a less prepared classroom.

Principle 2: Build Relationships and Community

One teacher I know who works with troubled teens told me that she believes that 90% of discipline is relationship, and in my 25 years of working with kids with emotional and behavioral disorders, I would have to agree. In addition, research has clearly shown that classrooms where a strong sense of community is forged have the fewest behavior problems. Get to know your kids. Wear nametags every week. Celebrate the diversity that exists in your classroom. Find out what the kids like, what they do outside of church. Sunday mornings can be hectic and rushed, so you might want to take the time and effort to arrange a social gathering of kids and parents early in the church year such as a picnic, sleepover, or bonfire. In addition, help the children form friendships with each other. Ask the Religious Educator if you can get a list of names and phone numbers to distribute to the kids in the class. I have gotten my own reluctant child to attend by having a Sunday school friend sleep over on Saturday night. Once the friendship was formed, my son became eager to go to Sunday school on subsequent Sundays to see his new friend.

Another trick that may work for you, especially with preteens and older elementary children who are losing their interest in Sunday school, is getting them involved in service activities in the community and in the church. Do the AIDS Walk as a group. Plant a flowerbed in the parking lot. Give them responsibility around the church in areas such as ushering and helping with the younger children. These kinds of activities have the power to transform a reluctant group into a cohesive, involved one.

Principle 3: Create Class Standards

In the first session or two, take time to generate a list of no more than 5 class standards for behavior. The way I find this most effectively done is to have the kids suggest standards that they write on a large piece of newsprint. All ideas are accepted. After a list has been generated, work with the class to hone the list into a more concise list. For example, if you have “no hitting” and “no teasing” on the first list, ask the children if there is a general rule (i.e., “respect each other”) that would encompass both. Make sure that in

your final list, all of the rules are stated positively. For example, instead of “don’t misuse the materials’, suggest “take care of the materials”. For older kids, have them look at the UU principles and see if there is anything there they would like to include as a standard. Make a final poster of the rules to be posted every week. Send a copy home. When misbehavior occurs, simply ask the child, “Are you breaking a rule? Which one?” When problems occur reflecting behavior that is not addressed in the rules, have a class discussion asking the students if they would like to add a new rule. Overall, make sure that the kids take ownership of the rules and facilitate their encouragement of each other in following them.

Principle 4: Respond clearly, supportively and consistently to misbehavior.

What is the process for responding to misbehavior in your classroom and church school? If you do not have a clear process, work with your teaching team and Religious Educator to develop one. For example, for younger children, we might rely heavily on distraction, redirection and one-on-one support. For older children, chronic misbehavior may have to be referred to the Religious Educator. The Religious Educator can then intervene non-punitively with the child to find out what is at the root of the problem and what can be done to resolve the issues. At times, it will be necessary to bring the parents of the child into the process for additional information and support. For example, in my intervention with a family of a child who had been quite disruptive, I learned that he was not taking his medication on the weekends. We decided (after consulting with his doctor) to try giving his medication to him before Sunday school and to involve him in helping out with snacks (to give him a break from the classroom). Our adjustments made a world of difference! Overall, I urge all of my teachers to let me know about problems while they are still small. It is much harder to resolve these issues when anger and resentment has built up over a number of weeks.

Principle 5: Talk so kids will listen; Listen so kids will talk.

When you think back on the teachers that you have had or observed that were the most effective, you will probably recall their respectful attitude, the positive choices that they constantly gave their students and the active way that they listened to what their students had to say. Effective teachers describe the problem (“there are crayons on the floor”) and

offer choices (“would you like to pick up the crayons or put away the snack?”) instead of making demands (“pick up the crayons”). They give information (“that paint is not the kind that can be washed out of your clothes”) instead of giving orders (“put on a smock”). They describe how they feel (“I feel frustrated when kids interrupt each other because I want to hear what each one of you has to say”) rather than blaming (“you are being very rude”). They involve children in problem solving individually and as a group. Adele Faber and Elaine Maislich have an excellent book that describes these techniques clearly for home or classroom use titled *How to Talk so Kids Can Learn*. Put it on your reading list!

Principle 6: Ask questions

Now that should be easy for a UU! When you don’t understand, need ideas, or simply need to vent, seek the support of another teacher, your Religious Educator or ask to have a Religious Education Committee member as liaison to your class. Although you are probably very busy, take advantage of any training opportunities that are offered in your church or district. You will gain a great deal of information and have a wonderful opportunity to network with other teachers. Church school is a dynamic process, a true village where we can come together to create wonder and joy with the children. Be part of the village. Don’t try to go it alone.

Principle 7: Remember why we are there.

You planned that lesson all week. You spent seven hours cutting out game board pieces and rubber banding them in packets for each student. You went to three libraries before you found the right book on about friendship. You invited an origami expert to come and make paper cranes with the children she decided to give birth to twins last night instead. It is the first day of spring, the birds are singing, and you did not plan time to go outside and play in the creek. What should you do? Change gears. The real value of Sunday morning is the feelings between teachers and kids and the positive memories created. Sure, the curricula are terrific, but you will know when it is time to let go of it because it isn’t working or something else draws the attention and passion of the children. Trust your gut. The more you do, the better you will get at it.

Abby L. W. Crowley, Ed.D., former Director of Religious Education, Paint Branch Unitarian Universalist Church, Adelphi, MD

Handout 30

Support Checklist

By Rev. Helen Zidowecki

The Support Checklist includes concrete details and philosophy, as both are needed. The topics are alphabetical, but can be discussed in any order. While many of these items focus on children, consider them for all ages. Constantly consider other details that need to be addressed.

SAFETY

Physical safety

- How safe is the space for the age-specific group that will be using the area? Are the furnishings safe, including toys?
- Are the heat, ventilation and lighting adequate?
- Are there at least two ways to exit the space and the building? Are these posted in each space?
- Is there a first aid kit? Does this include a write-up of universal precautions and supplies (such as non-latex gloves) in the kit? Of other first aid procedures?
- Can the space accommodate mobility, other needs?
- If there are maintenance problems, such as burned out lights, what is the maintenance/repair procedure?

Personal safety (Also see Students)

- Is it clearly noted with whom children can leave the activity and the church?
- Is personal information, such as addresses and phone numbers, protected? Names on pictures?
- How do children leave the session: Do parents come to get them? Are they accompanied by an adult to a specific area of the church, or allowed to leave the session by themselves?

Playground safety

- Is the playground equipment safe for the age groups that will be using it? (Consider type and condition)
- What is the arrangement for adult supervision?

Abuse considerations/children and adults

- What are the provisions for protection of children and adults around abuse concerns? Are there two adults with children? OR adults nearby?
- Space that has a "window" to the outside?
- Reporting procedure if problems arise? Is the Code of Ethics used/signed?
- Is there a procedure for addressing abuse or neglect that may come to the attention of leaders?
- What are the arrangements for activities that are outside of the designated group space?
- Are permission forms needed for field trips?
- Who needs to be informed of such activities and how? Who transports and are licenses and insurance current? Is the vehicle safe, including proper seats and seatbelts?

SCHEDULE

- Are the children in the opening part of the service?
- Each Sunday? If not, how often? How is this scheduled?
- Is there a gathering with other groups, such as a children's worship or a common closing? Who leads these?
- What is the projected length and clock time for sessions? (And working clocks in the rooms?)
- Scheduling who is teaching what when. To the degree possible, teachers schedule themselves. What are the specific practices that need to be considered, such as two teachers with every group every session, rotating teams, different teams for different blocks of time?

Church calendar

- What are the special events in the church year in which children are or could be involved? How will these affect the teaching schedules?

SETTING THE STAGE (Also see Space)

- How does the space reflect the theme for the session? Is the set-up inviting?

- What welcomes participants? Music, pictures, artifacts? How are participants welcomed?
- Space walk: Walk into the space as if you were a group participant rather than the leader (or ask another person to do this). Describe what you see, what you hear, how you feel.

SHARING

- How do you share what is going on Sunday with the larger church community? The children's families? What is the opportunity for sharing from the respective groups in the church newsletter?
- How would a family that is new know what is happening for their children ?
- Are Religious Education activities in the Order of Service, including when children leave the service, their schedule and locations?

SICK CHILDREN/ADULTS

- Do not bring children – or attend yourself – with fever, flu, or communicable illness such as chickenpox, conjunctivitis, etc. Some churches are concerned about immunization status.

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

- This approach focuses on the relational components of the church community and religious education.
- Small groups: We connect better with groups of 8 or fewer, including adults, in which there is consistency and which meet regularly and frequently. When the number of participants exceeds eight, consider starting another group.
- Ministry: serving, caring about. Take time to care, initially as the group forms; in inviting and including newcomers to the group; and acknowledging those who are missing from a session. This can be part of taking attendance, or "attending to" those who are present, and acknowledging those who are "absent." Knowing who is present and who is absent, and possibly the reason, is a matter of caring primarily, and the record keeping for planning is secondary.

Implications for Religious Education

- When preparing for a session, keep the people in your group in mind. Are there special considerations?
- Group defines its "Guidelines for Being Together," so that the expectations are clear, are formed with input from everyone, and are in the language of the group.
- Attentiveness to each other. This can be described as being present, sensing where you are (how you are feeling, etc.) and where the group is.
- Leaders are facilitators, setting the stage for the session, providing resources and structure, but not responsible for the learning itself. This also means that the leaders also learn in the process!
- Support is available for leaders. The leaders meet together on a regular basis, such as monthly, to discuss how things are going within the groups, how they are feeling about their role as leaders, and how they can support each other. These meetings are with a "coach," such as the DRE. The role of the coach is to support the leaders and to assist with the problem solving.

SNACK

- Are snacks provided for the groups?
- If so, who is responsible for providing these?
- What type of snacks are suggested? (consider nutritional value and age-specific needs) How are dietary needs and allergies addressed?
- If children attend Social/Fellowship Time with the adults, what are the specific arrangements? For younger children, are parents encouraged to bring their own snacks, such as bottles?

SOCIAL ACTION

- What are the social action events within the church community?
- How can these include the children, and what impact will this have on the Sunday schedule?
- What are the social action components of the curriculum and how can the church community become involved?

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

- What activities are included in the curriculum or in the classroom ritual that increase a child's sense of being included and saying that they are important?
Examples: each person saying their name and being welcomed by the group.
Group check-in regarding how they are feeling or what they have to share (briefly).

SPACE - use of space (see also Safety)

- Is the space shared with other groups?
- How much can be hung on walls, or left out? What are the limitations of the space?
- If the space does not allow for the activities in the curriculum, how can this be addressed? Who sets up the space before the group meets?
- What are the expectations on clean up? Is there janitorial service and what is included?
- What is included in the space that is considered as part of the session? (room, additional play area)
- What are the space arrangements outside of the session time, such as between activities, during social hour?

SPECIAL MOMENTS (Teachable Moments)

- These are the times when you stop and talk about a pet dying, or answer a question about something that a child has heard in the first part of the service -- even when it doesn't fit into the lesson. They do not come every session, and are usually unpredicted -- which is part of what makes them so special! One of the greatest gifts of a teacher is to facilitate and utilize these special moments. This requires being in the present moment with the children and being willing to share of self.

SPIRITUALITY

- Are there specific rituals that are used to set aside time together as special, sacred? This might be lighting a chalice or taking a moment when everyone is gathered to just be quiet or to take deep breaths.

- What is spiritual in the topic being discussed? How are your own spiritual needs being met?

STAFF

- The concept of "staffing" a program relates to providing personnel, paid or voluntary, so that the program can take place.
- Have you had adequate preparation for working with the specific age group? This particular curriculum?
- What is your understanding of Unitarian Universalism?
- Do you feel the need for more experience or information as you work with this group?
- Have staff been informed of/signed the "Code of Ethics for Working Adults/Older Youth"? What are the security procedures in your congregation related to safe environments?

STUDENTS

- Are registration of participant information forms completed?
- How are specific considerations addressed, such as mobility limitations, dietary and allergy considerations, medications and conditions that may influence behavior, patterns of attendance. How are children are grouped?
- How many children are in the specific group? What are the ages? Gender distribution?
- Some groups may need time and activities for group bonding before the curriculum or program is introduced.

SUBSTITUTES

- What are the plans for coverage if a teacher is not able to teach a particular session? Who is to be called? If there is a change, how is the DRE/Sunday morning coordinator informed?

SUCCESS

- How do you define a successful day?

- Discuss how to share successes and the creative things that occur within the groups. This can include articles in the newsletter, speaking in the service, etc.

SUPPLIES

- What are the standard supplies available for each group?
- Where are these supplies kept, and how are they obtained and maintained? What is the procedure for obtaining special supplies?
- Will teachers be reimbursed for special expenses?
- If so, what is the procedure for getting reimbursement?

SUPPORT

- What is the support that is available to teachers if assistance is needed on Sunday morning?
- What is the support if there is an issue in a group, such as a child is not able to function in a manner that allows the others to be safe or to participate?
- How is support given to leaders as a group or as a team? How do you get support for addressing a topic in the curriculum that may be difficult for you?
- One of the key support people for Religious Education is the minister. This includes advocating for the program, being available for pastoral care for participants and their families, supporting the leaders, meeting and being known to the participants.

Handout 31

The Care and Feeding of Volunteers: Part Two

Judith A. Frediani

Training (teacher development, orientation, preparation)

It is hard to get volunteers to come to a teacher development workshop for more than a couple of hours, so make that time really valuable. For example, a scavenger hunt for where to find scissors is not important; use the time to share safety policies, experience the core of your religious education/faith development philosophy, address their questions (which usually include disciplinary ones) and review their programs in teams.

Be reassuring. Let them know they do not have to be experts in a topic, just facilitators of religious inquiry. They do not have to scramble for materials if they let you know what they need ahead of time. They do not ever have to teach alone, and you are there if they need help with a challenging situation.

Show they are highly valued. Have an attractive packet of helpful information ready for each of them (policies, contact information, what to do if they are sick Saturday night, etc.). Serve really good snacks and beverages. Have the minister there (the religious educator leads the program) to demonstrate how important this is not only by their presence, but with words of blessing and inspiration. Have other lay and staff leaders as appropriate (membership chair, board member, etc.) to show this is a commitment of the whole congregation.

Support

Before and throughout the volunteers' teaching time, help them prepare for their role. They may not ask for help; volunteer it. Many congregations use sheets the teachers fill out every week with how it went and what they need. These are very helpful for providing ongoing support.

Different people need different types of support. Some need a note or word that they are doing great. Someone may need transportation in order to teach. Some may need you to clarify the session plan in detail or need help organizing themselves. Some may benefit from meeting with you at times during the program; others will find that unnecessary. Try to offer the kind of support that is welcome.

Recognition

Don't wait until that Sunday in June to recognize your teachers. That is the last, not the first opportunity. When teachers are recognized and appreciated for the vital ministry they offer, it is easier to recruit volunteers, and June is clearly too late to help recruitment. Further, they deserve recognition throughout the year, not in one ceremony that can unfortunately become a bit too rote.

Use the church newsletter, website, and orders of service to name teachers and highlight what they are doing. Use pictures. Did the first grade make a meditation labyrinth? Make sure the teachers' names and pictures are included in the publicity. Have the programs, grades and teachers listed on every order of service.

Consider a dedication ritual for teachers at the beginning of every term or year. A number of congregations do this, often in the form of a covenant, within the Sunday morning worship service to recognize the gift of teaching and the trust the congregation has placed in the teachers.

Testify! Testify! The testimonials of teachers – in the worship service and in congregational media – are one of the most powerful recruitment tools. Teachers often speak enthusiastically about their experiences, including learning about UUism and their own faith, having a wonderful time with the children and youth, feeling a sense of connection to and belonging in the congregation, making new friends, and growing in confidence as leaders.

Give some thought to your ritual of recognition. What would be meaningful in your congregation? In some congregations, teachers wear special nametags, stoles, vests or aprons while teaching. Their pictures are prominently displayed on a bulletin board. What symbolic gift do you give teachers? Is the ritual of recognition lively, or kind of flat? Do the children and youth participate? How about the minister and other staff in addition to the religious educator? Congregational lay leaders? The full choir? Or is this the Sunday everyone can miss? It should not be about the religious educator thanking teachers for volunteering – it should be the faith community appreciating a ministry so important to families and crucial to the health of the congregation. This is a good time for some testimonials so the folks in the pews think, "Wow, I hope I can teach next year!"

Structure

Recruit – Develop – Support – Recognize is an ongoing cycle with no beginning or end.

But there is another factor that impacts both recruitment and the quality of the teaching experience for volunteers, and that is how worship and religious education are structured in your congregation. There are different models to consider, and options within those models.

Worship and RE conducted at the same time Sunday morning is by far the most common schedule. To the extent that the two activities are competing for adult participation, congregations have been using models that provide flexibility for volunteers:

The shared responsibility of team teaching for a limited number of months frees volunteers to attend some worship services and travel as needed. This is the most common adaptation to the volunteer challenge.

The small group ministry for children model of religious education moves away from the graded classroom structure and uses a communal opening time followed by small groups of mixed age children with teachers using the themes introduced in the opening story. This is a more shared approach than the separate classroom approach, but still requires commitment. Resources for adapting small group ministry for children and for youth can be found here: <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/resources/index.shtml>

In the Workshop Rotation Method, groups of children – not necessarily the same age – rotate from one learning opportunity to another with adult “guides” who do not have to prepare material or teach, but simply accompany the children to help and support them, and add continuity to their program. Each learning opportunity is staffed by “experts” in some medium, such as puppet-making, painting, photography, dance, etc. who share their expertise every Sunday for one month with the rotating groups of children. They prepare these activities, but do not prepare a curriculum as such. They offer different ways to experience the story of the month. This approach is different, but not necessarily easier, to recruit for.

Particularly in very small congregations, some use an open classroom approach with various learning stations. Children start together in a circle for the morning’s story and focus, then choose different activities located around the space where adults guide their learning, but do not have to prepare curricular material to the extent they would in a

closed classroom. Some congregations use this approach during interim weeks and times of low attendance.

Theme-based ministry approach. While worship and religious education are held at the same time, the theme of the worship service and the theme of the children and youth programs are the same, for example, “forgiveness.” One story may be shared with all; all ages may be together for part of the service to hear the story. One advantage – families and people of all ages can share about the theme and learn together throughout the week.

Encourage the group to share their experiences with these and other models. There are pros and cons to each, as well as further adaptations. It is important in choosing an organizational structure to keep in mind not only the recruitment of volunteers, but the faith development of the participants. Is it coherent? Does it have depth? Is it a faith foundation or a series of discrete activities?

Worship and Religious Education do not meet at the same time.

The following model is radical for UU congregations, although it is traditional in other denominations:

The whole congregation worships together, and all experience religious education at the same time, although in age groupings of some kind, either before or after worship. This is a structure that is supposed to make it much easier for people to volunteer to teach because they do not miss worship. It is of growing interest as a way to live out a truly multigenerational community. Of course, teachers are still needed and any models of RE “delivery” can be used during the learning time.

Questions for discussion:

What is the culture in your congregation regarding “RE” and the professionals and volunteers who lead it, and the children and youth it serves? Is it understood and valued?

How were you recruited to teach for the first time? How was that experience?

What is one success story in your congregation regarding the teacher recruitment cycle?

Who has responsibility for teacher recruitment? (It should not be just the religious educator.)

What is the larger context of volunteerism in your congregation? Are people reluctant to volunteer for anything? Is everyone on three committees? Is the congregation focused on meetings rather than living their faith and building beloved community through worship, learning and justice-making (all of which are at the core of religious education)?

What is one idea you can bring back to your congregation for a do-able change? Who are your allies for this change? What is the first step?

More on Supporting Volunteers

Orientation for Volunteers

The topics below are typically covered in an effective orientation for those volunteering in the faith development of children and youth:

Philosophy and Goals of the program

Overview or Scope and Sequence

Specifics of the Curricula

Range of Developmental Needs in the Group

Classroom Management Techniques

Teaching Team Guidelines

Supplies and Materials

What topics would you add to this list?

Support for Volunteers

Each congregation has a different support system in place yet it is likely that there are some core elements in common. What are some of the administrative tasks related to the support of volunteers in your congregation? Are these done by the religious educator or volunteers?

Social media groups or email lists for teaching teams

Classroom supplies – Who buys? Who organizes?

Teaching team schedules – are these available online (on Google Drive, for example)?

Classroom Helper schedules – are reminders sent?

Adapting curriculum – shared online?

Class lists and tracking attendance – database management

What would you add?

Recognition...

Bulletin board

Photos of the teaching staff.

Special name tags

Publicity in newsletter or congregational website

Other ideas...

Appreciation

Thank you notes Gifts made by children

Contributions to organizations Books donated in honor of In worship service

Teacher Appreciation Meals

Other ideas...

Handout 32

Sample Religious Education Teacher Contract

I understand that I am a teacher for the _____ (grade) class in the church school. I agree to coordinate with the other members of my teaching team, to be sure that each Sunday is covered and planned for.

I understand that if I have been convicted of a crime involving a minor, I will notify the Director/Minister of Religious Education of this fact and/or will resign from my church school responsibilities.

Two people (not from the same household) who can be contacted by the DRE/MRE as references are: Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

I understand that the teacher is not responsible for Sundays when Intergenerational Worship services are scheduled during the full church school period.

When I am scheduled to be teaching/assisting on Sundays, I will arrive at the church 30 minutes early to prepare the classroom area. I understand that the time for class lessons/activities is from 9:30 - 10:45 or 11:15 - 12:30, and that my class will attend the age-appropriate worship service at 9:35 or 11:20.

I understand that my teaching duties do not extend beyond 10:48am or 12:32pm, and that any child still in my care at that time is to be handed over to their parents or to the church school office staff.

I will leave my classroom in order so that the next class will have a clean room in which to meet. I will make sure that all doors are locked and the lights are turned off.

I have read the Health and Safety guidelines (enclosed) for our program and will follow them.

While I am responsible to check ahead of time to be sure necessary supplies are available for future class crafts/projects, I understand that I may request those supplies be obtained for me by staff by filling out a Resource Request Form at least one week in advance. Otherwise, I will obtain the materials myself, obtaining reimbursement where necessary (providing that I have a proper receipt and submit to the church school office).

If I am unable to teach on one of the Sundays I have agreed upon, then (as soon as possible) I will contact my team members first to arrange a substitute. If, after contacting my team, I am unable to arrange for a substitute then I will contact a substitute from the list provided. As a last resort, I will contact the Religious Education Committee member who is a liaison to my class.

SIGNED:

I have read and understand the above contract, have provided the necessary information, and agree to the above terms.

Date _____

Signature _____

Handout 33

Team Teaching

“By ‘team teaching’ we mean two or more people who plan together, teach together, and evaluate together. We don’t mean ‘rotation teaching’ where people pass from Sunday to Sunday like ships in the night.”

-- Eugene B. Navias

The teaching team is composed of two or more people, with one person designated as the team leader or contact person. The team meets together regularly for planning, and each member of the team works in the classroom with every other member of the team at some point. It is desirable if all members can be present on several occasions during the year. Team teaching isn’t rotation teaching, but it does permit Sundays off.

Substitutes are rarely needed when there is a teaching team, because the team members are able to arrange coverage so that someone is always there. At times, a team member who teaches only one quarter will agree to substitute during other quarters.

Each teaching team needs at least one major planning meeting as the work begins. After that, brief monthly meetings, perhaps after the class, will be sufficient. For many teams, once a comfortable working pattern has been established, telephone and email communication works well.

-- Betty Jo Middleton in Support for the Volunteer Religious Education Teacher (Alphabet Soup2001.)

NOTE : Some programs specify other configurations for teaching teams; Spirit Play calls for a teacher and a door keeper and Rotation for guides and workshop leaders. When not otherwise specified, team teaching is best practice.

Handout 34

A Fictional (But Not Unrealistic) Teaching Team Rotation

Some have more experience than others; some have more time; some (yes, it is true) more commitment. They worked out their teaching rotation this way:

SUNDAY	LEADER	HELPER
1	Jewell	Ruby
2	Ruby	Opal
3	Opal	Pearl
4	Pearl	Topaz
5	Topaz	Sapphire
6	Jewell	Sapphire
	Opal (extra hands needed for project)	
7	Opal	Ruby
8	Ruby	Jewell
9	Jewell	Opal
10	Opal	Pearl
11	Pearl	Sapphire
12	Ruby	Jewell
13	Jewell	Topaz
14	Ruby	Opal

In fourteen weeks of teaching, Jewell was in the classroom six times; Ruby six times; Opal seven times; Pearl four times; Topaz three times; Sapphire three times. During the next fourteen weeks, perhaps Sapphire and Topaz will find more time and some of the others will be able to attend worship more often.

How about giving this kind of team teaching a try? You will have noticed that all of these volunteer teachers are gems—in this work we meet lots of diamonds (some in the rough) but not many lumps of coal.

By Betty Jo Middleton, in *While You're Growing: Strategies and Resources for Small Religious Education Programs* (Alphabet Soup 2003)

Handout 35

Leader Reflection and Planning

Each session of Tapestry of Faith curricula include a section on Leader Reflection and Planning. It is helpful to make this as easy as possible for volunteers to complete – a written report? Via email?

To reflect on today's session, ask yourself:

1. How have my/our expectations about today's time been met?
2. What surprised me about today?
3. What can I do differently as a leader next time to meet the needs of this group?
4. What have I learned about the type of activity that this group responds to? How can I use what I've learned as I plan the next session?

Handout 36

Sample Teacher Check-in Form

Sierra-Marie Gerfao, DRE

Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Olympia, Washington

Please take a few quiet moments and answer the following four questions.

Please reflect, comment, and rate your experience so far this year as a religious education leader. Use a scale of 1-10 (1=Not one bit...this didn't happen at all! 10=Extremely...this happened a lot!)

To what extent has this teaching experience deepened your relationship with one or more child/youth?

To what extent has this teaching experience deepened your relationship with one or more other adult?

To what extent has this teaching experience deepened your sense of belonging to this community?

To what extent has this teaching experience given you new knowledge or insights about your faith?

Handout 37

How to Be Sure the Teacher Development Workshop Goes Home with Your Teachers

Suggestions from Reach and LREDA email lists

From Leah Purcell:

I'm creating an RE volunteer development workshop on teaching as a spiritual practice. I'm basing it on work the congregation has done with Rev. Thandeka --- which is to stop and take a breath. (Reminds me of Buddhist practices) How do you all make the messages of your workshops stick with your volunteers? This one is a little tricky for me because the workshop is not content-based; it's a practice. These are the things I'm thinking of:

- learning a song
- putting up visual reminders in the rooms
- making a craft to take home giving something to wear, like beads
- offering to set up a Face Book group to share experiences

From Jeannette Ruyle:

What a wonderful question. To your list maybe you could add "tell a story." Stories often stick with people. I did this for the first time this year and told the Pike's Place fish market story, complete with fish beans bags. Also for the first time, we tried combining RE teacher development experience with a family potluck. Everyone heard the story. Then children (with youth volunteers) watched a video while adults got their training. The key ideas of the story ----- Show up! Choose your attitude! Play! Make people's day! ----- were then applied to how we do RE during a smaller group of just adults, in an RE group room set up ahead of time for a specific sample session.

From April Fritts:

This is something that is near and dear to my heart. Teaching should be a spiritual practice and helping our volunteers to feel that will make them feel even more connected to their UU faith. Some things I have done to both make the workshop "stick" and to further develop that teaching---spirit connection are:

We often make a craft of some kind that reflects the RE theme for the month (we do this in both small teaching teams after church and in the RE Committee meetings). During the start---up workshop, we would make a bigger craft that reflects the over---arching theme

for the year. We've done chalices, prayer beads, travel altars, collages... all sorts of things.

I like to use the Spiritual Preparation section of the Tapestry of Faith programs. Even if we aren't using a Tapestry of Faith curricula, I use the search engine to find a relevant practice. I send it out to the teachers monthly as our theme moves through its various levels.

Making your volunteer development workshop “stick” means giving them habits they can develop on their own and continue. That's the tough part. One way we have done that is by having each teaching team meet once a month after church for a Chat n' Chew. They bring snacks to share, I give them questions to ponder (I have used Small Group Ministry and Lifespan Faith Development by Rev. Helen Zidowecki and Adapting Small Group Ministry for CRE by Gail Forsyth---Vail to help me develop those questions to ponder). The teachers really seemed to like that chance to remind them of the things we discussed at the larger volunteer workshop and to connect to the rest of the team. Sometimes we do take---home/reminder sort of spiritual crafts during those meetings too.

Handout 38

Tapestry of Faith – Spiritual Preparation

The “Spiritual Preparation” found at the beginning of each session or workshop is a tool for centering and grounding for the leader to do the work of leading and a tool for engaging in one’s own spiritual development. There are a variety of ways to experience a spiritual prep such as journaling, conversation w/co-leader, meditating on questions, conversation w/family or peers/friends. SP ensures faith development will be part of your teaching experience!

There are different types of SP:

Spiritual prep about “you and your baggage”:

- Guides you to acknowledge your own experiences, positive and/or negative, about the topics presented or invited by the workshop
- Helps you articulate negative or resistant emotions, and encourages you to let leading the workshop help you deal with them and grow from them, and/or set them aside so you can focus on the important role of guiding the participants safely, without judgment, from a centered place in yourself.

Spiritual prep about challenges a leader might experience in or from the group:

- Some spiritual preps are about holding each member in thought and prayer.
- What if the group or some people in it are challenging?
- Some SP guides the leader to create a container in which everyone can grow (this includes the leader!).
- SP helps with honoring the growth path of everyone in the group. Guides the leader to affirm everyone’s gifts and everyone’s fragile places.
- SP has use for encounters beyond the workshop experience! It gives you practice in meeting your life in a way that grounds you in spirit.

Spiritual prep for dealing with challenging content:

- Spiritual prep exercises affirm that you do not need to be an expert to effectively lead.
- SP for content-heavy workshops helps orient the leader to the material.

- SP helps the leader get comfortable leading a group into a topic about which they, themselves, are not necessarily more knowledgeable than participants.
- SP pulls out “hand holds” in the content, for the leader. Some of the SPs help you discover experiences of your own that can guide you into the topical content.

[Example: Sing to the Power Session 6 -The Power of Presence](#)

Find a place where you can be quiet with your thoughts. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for several minutes, perhaps repeating a word or phrase to separate yourself from the activities of the day. When you feel settled and relaxed, consider:

- Can you think of a time when someone's silent presence has made a difference in your life?
- Can you think of a time when your own silent presence has made a difference?
- What does it feel like when someone is truly present to you?
- What does it look like when someone is fully present to you? What do they do/not do?
- How completely present are you to your children? Spouse/partner? Friends? Co-workers? People you disagree with?
- In what situations do you aspire to be more fully present to others?

Handout 39

Creating Covenants

Almost every Tapestry of Faith program for any age begins with creating a covenant – here are a few links (for more, [search Tapestry of Faith](#) for “create a covenant” and select an age range.)

K/1 Wonderful Welcome:

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/welcome/session2/sessionoverview/118131.shtml>

2nd/3rd Love Will Guide Us:

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/loveguide/session1/sessionplan/activities/168145.shtml>

6th Grade – Amazing Grace:

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/grace/session3/sessionplan/activities/115169.shtml>

Jr. High - Families:

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/families/workshop1/workshopplan/activities/105585.shtml>

High School - Place of Wholeness Workshop 10 (entire workshop):

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/wholeness/workshop10/workshopoverview/167933.shtml>

High School - Virtue Ethics:

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/virtueethics/workshop1/workshopplan/activities/193093.shtml>

Adult – Faith Like a River:

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/river/workshop1/workshopplan/activities/175608.shtml>

Adult – Faith Like a River Workshop 7 (entire workshop)

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/river/workshop7/index.shtml>

You can also search the Reach list archives – here’s a “Lesson Plan for Creating Covenants”:

<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/htdig/reach-l/Week-of-Mon-20040202/032836.html>

Handout 40

Children's Covenant

We light this chalice to celebrate Unitarian Universalism

This is the church of the open mind

This is the church of the helping hands

This is the church of the loving heart

We come to church to celebrate, to learn, to make friends, and to be of service. We come to explore life's ancient questions: Who are we? Where did we come from? What happens when we die? How shall we live our lives? We come to church to hear stories, to light candles, to have a moment of quiet, to sing a song, and to notice the wonder and mysteries of the world. We come to church to be together, in a loving, caring community, young and old together.

When we come to church, we make promises to each other, spoken and unspoken.

These promises are sometimes called a "covenant." A covenant describes how we will treat each other, what we will do to create a safe and sacred space where all may learn and grow. Our covenant, in this church, is grounded in our Unitarian Universalist principles.

Our Unitarian Universalist Principles Children's Version

RED – RESPECT OTHERS

PRINCIPLE # 1: 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, to be included in the day's activities at church. This means that we don't call people names, we don't interrupt teachers or one another, or talk when someone else is talking. This means we take turns so every person has a chance to talk, to play on a certain piece of equipment or do a special activity.

ORANGE – OFFER FAIR AND KIND TREATMENT TO ALL

PRINCIPLE #2: WE BELIEVE THAT ALL PEOPLE SHOULD BE TREATED FAIRLY AND KINDLY. This means everyone is welcome at church. It means everyone -no matter what their age or gender, race or family, abilities or differences - deserves to be treated fairly and with kindness. This means we pay attention to those around us, welcome those who are new, help those who are lonely or hurting, and deal with our anger and disappointments in honest, caring ways. It means we use don't use hurtful words or hit or throw things at one another. It means we take turns, share our snacks, leave something for the next person. It means we speak out and get help when we see someone being treated unfairly.

YELLOW – YEARN TO LEARN THROUGHOUT LIFE

PRINCIPLE #3: WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER AND LEARNTOGETHER. Church is a place for fun and friendship, for learning and service. This means we need to listen to our teachers and one another, to participate in group activities to the best of our abilities, to help someone who is new or struggling, to share what we are thinking or feeling. It means we challenge one another to do our best, and apologize when we fail to treat others the way we would like to be treated. It means we listen to adults, follow their instructions, and seek them out for help when we are troubled or need assistance.

GREEN – GROW BY EXPLORING IDEAS AND VALUES TOGETHER

PRINCIPLE #4: WE BELIEVE THAT EACH PERSON MUST BE FREE TO SEARCH FOR WHAT IS TRUE AND RIGHT IN LIFE. This means everyone is encouraged to share their own thoughts and feelings, without fear of being laughed at or criticized. It means activities will be planned at church that are varied, that appeal to different people for different reasons. It means people of all ages will be given choices, whenever possible, so they can follow their own interests, discover what is true and right for them. It means that we will behave in ways that allow other people to be themselves, to explore and do the things that have meaning to them, without judging or making fun of them.

BLUE – BELIEVE IN OUR IDEAS AND ACT ON THEM

PRINCIPLE #5: WE BELIEVE THAT ALL PERSONS SHOULD HAVE A SAY ABOUT THE THINGS THAT CONCERN THEM. Adults in this church - especially teachers, ministers, and parents - have a special responsibility to provide a safe and loving space for children, where all can learn and grow. This principle reminds us that children - even at a young age - ought to have a say about what happens at church, to be encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings, to offer their ideas for new or better ways of doing things. It means we need older children and youth, especially, to contribute their ideas, time and energy to church activities. It means all of us, young and old, need to listen to one another, ask for suggestions and advice, and work together to make church a safe and special place.

INDIGO – INSIST ON PEACE, FREEDOM AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

PRINCIPLE #6: WE BELIEVE IN WORKING FOR A PEACEFUL, FAIR AND FREE WORLD. This means we settle our disagreements in honest, caring, peaceful ways. We don't fight, push, shove or throw things at one another. We do not bring toy guns or knives to church, or play in violent ways. We don't use hurtful words or talk about people behind their back or exclude them from our activities. We don't destroy or damage what belongs to the church or other people. And, if we do, it means we apologize, talk over our problems, fix what has been broken, or get help in doing so. It means we speak out and get help when we see a fight occurring or someone being treated unfairly. It means we learn how to express our anger and disappointments in healthy ways, taking time to sit down, to breathe, to be quiet, asking a friend or adult to help us.

VILOET – VALUE OUR INTERDEPENDENCE WITH NATURE

PRINCIPLE #7: WE BELIEVE IN CARING FOR OUR PLANET EARTH, THE HOME WE SHARE WITH ALL LIVING THINGS. This means we enjoy our beautiful church, the buildings and grounds, and all the creatures who share this space with us. It means we help with clean-up on Sunday mornings and after special activities. It means we clean up our messes, don't waste food or supplies, and recycle whatever we can. It means we don't jump on furniture, climb on the roof, or play on equipment that is meant for people much smaller (or younger) than us. It means we don't step in squirrel holes or put sticks or hands in the places where animals may live. It means we help with the garden or

volunteer our time to work with the Grounds Committee or clean and scrub on "work-party" days.

Living our UU Principles in our daily lives - at church and at home - can be hard work. All of us, young and old, will make mistakes at times, will fail to live up to the promises we have made to one another. At those times, it is important for us to talk honestly, with respect and love; to get the help from someone we trust; to listen to one another; to apologize and make amends; to explore what we can do differently next time. In this way, we learn and grow. In this way, we keep our church a safe and special place. In this way, we make a difference in the world.

If we see these principles not being followed in our church we have a responsibility to respond.

If we are a child, we can:

- name the behavior (e.g., "I don't like being called names")
- walk away (e.g., from the one doing the name-calling)
- offer or model an alternative behavior (e.g., offer to play a different game)
- ask an adult to help stop the behavior
- share our feelings with a peer and/or adult (e.g., "It scares me when you shout at me.")

If we are an adult, we must take immediate action whenever the safety of our children is involved (e.g., stopping a fight, taking a dangerous item from a child, asking a child to come down from the roof, etc.). We will also, depending on the situation, take other actions to ensure a safe and sacred space for all. Such actions may include:

- naming the behavior and asking that it be stopped
- having a child sit quietly for five minutes in a specified place, talking with them afterward about what happened
- offering an alternative activity, in the group and/or outside
- speaking with a child's parent about the troubling behavior
- asking the parent to attend the child's group next time

- consulting with the Director of Religious Education
- for acts of gross misbehavior, getting parent from sanctuary/meeting space

If a child is chronically disruptive and/or unable to participate in a positive manner in the group, their parent(s) will be contacted by the Director of Religious Education to discuss the problem, explore alternatives, and agree upon a plan that meets the needs of the child, their peers and the congregation.

I HAVE REVIEWED THIS COVENANT AND TALKED WITH MY CHILD SO THAT THEY UNDERSTANDS THE BEHAVIOR WE EXPECT OF HIM/HER AT CHURCH. I WILL HELP CHILDREN — MY OWN AND OTHERS — FOLLOW THESE PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES WHENEVER I AM AT CHURCH.

Parent's Signature:

Date:

I HAVE TALKED ABOUT THESE PRINCIPLES — AND HOW I AM TO BEHAVE AT CHURCH — WITH MY PARENT AND WILL DO MY BEST TO FOLLOW THEM.

Child's Signature:

Date:

Handout 41

Teacher Dedication, Sudbury, Massachusetts

By Carol MacFarlane, adapted from Carol Greve

DRE: This morning we'd like to recognize those members of the parish who have volunteered to be our church schoolteachers this year. I'd like to begin with a reading from Minot Savage, a turn-of-the-century Unitarian minister who wrote about the qualities he wanted to see in his church school teachers. I apologize for his exclusive language, but he was not a product of our time!

And remember that I do not want anybody for a teacher in my Sunday school who thinks he is very wise. I certainly do not want anybody who is possessed with the idea he is very good, and I really do not want anybody who has nothing else to do. I want just human people, who appreciate that here is something that is worth their doing, and are willing to do the best they can. I do not care so much whether you teach theology, or how much religious history and biography you teach, or whether you are up concerning the missionary journeys of St. Paul. These are matters of interest and importance. But the principle thing, after all, is that you should bring the children with whom you come in contact close to a warm heart, that you surround them with an atmosphere of devotion. Teach them that they may become a part of this great effort of humanity to lift up the world.

DRE or R.E. CHAIR: At this time, we entrust to our teachers and advisors a most important task: the nurturing of our children's spiritual growth. It is a high calling and we are grateful to those who are willing to assume this responsibility. We would now like to recognize those people of the parish who have made this commitment to the Religious Education program.

(Teachers come forward as their names are read. Pins are handed out to them to wear.)

TEACHERS: We recognize and accept our teaching responsibility and pledge, as best we are able, to give ourselves for the spiritual well-being of our children and youth. We shall aim not to impose our ideas upon them, but to open and stimulate their minds.

PARISH: We recognize that we, too, are partners in this important endeavor — by the examples of the meaningful and good lives we model, by the relationships we establish with the children and youth of our church, and by the resources we provide to the Church School.

Handout 42

Group Project and Presentation

Renaissance Modules are designed to culminate in Group Presentations from which all may gain new insights and ideas.

Prepare a presentation of a teacher development workshop or event. Include:

- Mission and goals for the workshop or event
- Number of teachers to be involved
- Format and length
- Scheduling (with leadership)
- Content (including activities)
- Tools (forms, resources, etc.) that teachers need for ongoing support and daily use

Record the plan on a document that can be emailed, or in a PowerPoint presentation if possible.

The presentations should include:

- an overview of the teacher development workshop/event
- with statement of the mission and goals of the workshop
- a list of “tools” that teachers need for ongoing support and for daily use as they facilitate in lifespan faith development classrooms (Groups may choose to literally create representations of those tools. Tools may include forms, resources, etc.)
- and a demonstration of at least one activity they would do with their teachers.

Presentation: 25 minutes per group

Post-presentation feedback: 5 minutes per group

- Presenters first: How did you feel as you created the program?
- Total group: responses, comments, and clarifying questions

Handout 43

Selected Online Resources

Tapestry of Faith Programs and Resources:

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry>

UUA Faith Development Office monthly webinars:

<http://www.uua.org/re/teachers/webinars>

Balancing Acts and Safe Congregation from UUA:

<http://www.uua.org/safe/>

Call and Response blog site:

<http://callandresponse.blogs.uua.org/>

Daily Compass:

<http://www.dailycompass.org/>

Small Group Ministry

www.smallgroupministry.net

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/the-joys-challenges-covenant-groups>

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/small-group-ministry-creates-sacred-time>

Adapting Small Group Ministry for Children:

http://www.uua.org/documents/mpl/adapt_sgm_children.pdf

Small Group Ministry with Youth:

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/journey>

Church of the Larger Fellowship's Quest for Meaning worship:

<http://www.questformeaning.org/reflecting/worship>

Safety resources from Guide One Insurance:

<https://www.guideone.com/SafetyResources/Churches/churchindex.htm>

Safety Resources from Church Mutual:

<https://www.churchmutual.com/98/Safety-Resources>

Workshop Rotation website

www.rotation.org

Spirit Play website: <http://www.spiritplay.net/>

Sally Patton's resources:

<http://www.embracechildspirit.org/>

<http://www.uua.org/sites/live->

[new.uua.org/files/documents/dfd/welcoming_children_specialneeds.pdf](http://www.uua.org/files/documents/dfd/welcoming_children_specialneeds.pdf)

<http://www.embracechildspirit.org/pdfs/awareness.pdf>

http://www.embracechildspirit.org/pdfs/teacher_training.pdf

Multiple Intelligences: www.multipleintelligencesoasis.org

Reach email list: <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/reach-l>

Appendix 1: Small Group Ministry

Unitarian Universalist Teacher Development Using a Small Group Ministry Model, by Gail Forsyth-Vail

Small Group Ministry and Lifespan Faith Development, by Rev. Helen Zidowecki

Unitarian Universalist Teacher Development Using a Small Group Ministry Model

Gail Forsyth-Vail, Adult Programs Director, UUA, Ministries and Faith Development

Role of the teacher

- Mentor, guide, facilitator
- Representative of the congregation in companioning youth and children on their spiritual journey
- Primary pastoral caregiver for children

Skills/personal qualities that enhance teaching

- Personal spiritual practice and the ability to reflect on life's journey
- Understanding that spiritual journey is not a ladder, but rather a process
- Confidence to "go with the flow" and draw out the thoughts of the children
- Willingness to be silly, adventurous, etc, in order to encourage children to try out new experiences and ideas
- Classroom management skills

Method for developing skills/personal qualities

A once monthly small group session in a covenanted group using the small group ministry format:

- Check-in
- Opening story/question/reflection
- Individual responses to the question at hand
- Conversation about responses
- Questions/problems/concerns about situations or children
- Closing

Possible topics for reflections might include:

- A conversation about our own wilderness journeys in preparation for a session on the Exodus
- A conversation about balance in our lives in preparation for a session on Buddhism
- A conversation about death in preparation for a session on death and dying.

Religious professional would carefully plan, prepare, and facilitate the sessions.

Benefits to the teacher

- The teacher would have a chance to reflect regularly on their spiritual journey with other adults.
- The teacher would have the support of others in figuring out how to handle sticky situations.

- The teacher would feel competent to lead a class, and comfortable with sharing “processed” parts of their own journey with children.
- The teacher’s spiritual journey would become a gift to the children of the congregation.
- The teacher’s contribution would be respected as that of guide and mentor, representing the congregation in companioning its children as they grow in faith.

Benefits to the congregation and the children

- The congregation would be seeded with many adults who have done some thoughtful spiritual work. This approach would deepen the religious life of the congregation.
- Children would have models, mentors, and guides all the way through as they learn how to take responsibility for their own spiritual well-being and to reflect thoughtfully on their own life experiences.
- Group wisdom would be available for help with “extra care required” children.
- Pastoral needs of children would receive true attention.
- Children would have the chance to truly know others in the congregation and to be known.
- Parents would have a format for sharing pieces of their own spiritual journey with their children and with other children.

Potential problems/drawbacks to this approach

- It requires time, perhaps more time than adult volunteers are willing to devote to personal spiritual growth (at least one 2-hour session per month and some regular reflection time).
- There is no provision in this model for a safe congregation orientation (minimum one hour) or for a basic “nuts and bolts” orientation.
- It requires the attention and time of a religious professional to work with the teachers and to prepare and facilitate the sessions.

Small Group Ministry and Lifespan Faith Development

Rev. Helen Zidowecki, September 2006

Small Group Ministry changes my approach to religious education!

The focus of Unitarian Universalist Religious Education is spiritual development rather than gaining information, on how participants relate to stories rather than on how much they 'learn'. The 'learning' is from the impact of the story and the dialog, rather than on information gained. As Unitarian Universalist, we have the challenge and opportunity to focus on spiritual development and spiritual practices for a lifetime.

The language used in religious education changes from an instructional model to a community, connection, and relational model -- Relational Religious Education. The emphasis changes from religion education to an educational ministry.

The leader's focus is the group rather than the content. This is part of the 'ministry' and the essence of bringing a topic alive. The leader can go deeper with a topic, more 'engagement'.

There is greater latitude in grouping participants. We tend to group participants by age. Groups that cover several years allow for variations in maturation and development of participants, more latitude in arriving at gender balance, and wisdom shared over several years. The model can be used with very small groups --even the leader and a participant in a mentoring situation, small congregations and families.

Arts, crafts and activities enhance the dialog rather than illustrate the learning. Using activities allows various methods of expression and reacting. The outcome is increased interaction rather than a product related to the information.

Myths, Wisdom Stories become a major methodology. Understanding of the importance of mythology in our tradition -- mythology that surrounds our 'elders' -- gives clues to how their values and stories also come from the participants themselves.

In educational programs, we give tools for the spiritual journey, such as information, traditions, and spiritual practices. However, it is in expressing and sharing spiritual journeys that we integrate the learning. Small Group Ministry connects people as a ministry that enhances spiritual journeys and church connections.

<http://www.hzmre.com/sgm/index.php>

Appendix 2: Spiritual Practices to Use with Children

Meditation with Children: A Guide, by Susan Freudenthal

Writing Prayers, by Tracey L. Hurd, Ph.D.

Meditation with Children: A Guide

A Moment or Two of Silence: Integrating Meditation into Unitarian Universalist Practices with Children

Susan Freudenthal, Unitarian Universalist Church of Las Cruces, Las Cruces, NM

Reprinted from UU Faith Works, February 2006

“We will now enter into a moment of silent contemplation, meditation, and prayer,” or so we're told each time we gather in community to worship. It is a piece of the fabric of our worship. To hold a sacred moment within and sometimes to let it sail forth is a gift we can give to our children and youth. It can have meaning for our children and youth when made relevant and when practiced consistently.

Why should we do it at all? Our children are increasingly programmed from playgroups, parents' working schedules, school, music, sports, after-school clubs, nature clubs, and religious education. Information is presented to all of us in sound bites, commercial jingles, and headline- only news. Children and youth are over stimulated. If you are finding it difficult to keep their attention, you are clearly in the majority.

I believe our children need time and the tools with which they can slow down their world. Giving our children and youth the ability to focus inward for a brief period introduces them to a lifelong spiritual practice in an increasingly stressful world. Committing ourselves to meditation practices with children and youth affirms our Unitarian Universalist values. To nurture the practice of meditation with children and youth, you will need to be consistent. This element should be included in children's, intergenerational, and youth worship either weekly or biweekly. It is helpful to set a consistent tone and mood or ritual. I use a “worship bag” of consistent props, such as scarves and candles, and low lighting. We sit on the floor. I add music that fits the mood and tone of the meditation.

There are many different types of meditation. I will concentrate on three that work well with children and youth: Loving Kindness meditations, sitting meditations, and walking meditations. All three are practiced throughout the world and are rooted in the Buddhist tradition.

Loving Kindness Meditation

What is Loving Kindness meditation? Some call it “meta” meditation. As Unitarian Universalists, we embrace many ideas from a variety of sacred sources. The Loving Kindness meditation comes to us from the Mahayana branch of Buddhism. His holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet and Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist priest, are but two of the people whose influence on Western culture have helped popularize Loving Kindness.

Loving Kindness meditation begins with the idea of self-care. The Buddha described the spiritual path as the “uprooting of our personal mythologies.” Through meditation we can find, beneath our concepts as individuals, our connections to both all beings and ourselves. The first piece of a Loving Kindness meditation is to focus inward. This meditation practice uses four phrases repeated over and over:

May I be free from danger (May I be safe)

May I have mental happiness (May I be happy)

May I have physical happiness (May I be well)

May I have ease of wellbeing (May I live in peace)

The next piece of this practice is to extend the Loving Kindness to someone to whom we feel gratitude or respect, such as a parent or a teacher. Next the meditation is extended to a loved one, to beings we feel neither like nor dislike toward, and finally toward someone we may be in conflict with or someone who scares us.

Beginning the Practice

Set the mood; use a bell to signal the beginning and end of the meditation. Introduce the meditation by asking the children or youth if they know what meditation is; their responses will help you fill in the blanks. Remind them that meditation is not sitting still and being quiet. Tell them that today you are going to begin a different kind of meditation—a speaking meditation. Invite the group to choose a comfortable way to sit or lie down. They should be as comfortable as the space allows while remaining respectfully in the shared sacred space. Tell them you will ring a bell soon and they should repeat the words you speak after the bell rings. Let them know you will do this four times.

(Ring bell) (Pause)

May I be safe

May I be happy

May I be well

May I live in peace

(Repeat three more times and pause)

(Ring bell)

Ask the group what the words meant to them. Tell them this is the beginning of a meditation practice called Loving Kindness. Ask them why they think this is the name of the meditation. You may say something like this: “Some people think if we do this meditation often, we will remember it. If we remember it, we will know that we deserve to be safe, happy, well, and peacemakers.” Offer this meditation for several weeks before moving to the next piece.

Next Steps

Once you've determined that your group understands the inward meditation and has practiced it a few times, explain the next piece. They will begin sending the meditation out to someone they want to thank—someone they respect or someone who has helped them recently. Remind them that this meditation is called Loving Kindness. Explain that the same words they've said for themselves, they will now say with someone else in mind. Ask them to think of one person for now.

(Ring bell) (Pause)

May you be safe

May you be happy

May you be well

May you live in peace

(Repeat three more times and pause)

(Ring bell)

Allow time for the group to understand what you've done. Ask them if this meditation felt different and if so, how. Once again, make sure they leave knowing that their words do make a difference. The person they thought of might not know this meditation was meant for them, but that doesn't matter. The words they spoke are meant to bless those people to whom they feel grateful. Allow at least two sessions using this meditation. By the second week, add the first piece (May I be safe, etc.), spoken before this gratitude piece, so that they will extend loving kindness to themselves and to another.

By the third week, introduce the third blessing to those we don't know but wish well. Repeat the process of learning the new blessing one week and then adding the other blessings the next.

Introduce the final piece by saying something like this: "We all have someone in our lives that annoys us or makes us angry or frustrated, and it's normal to feel this way. There is something we can do to help us get over these feelings. We do not need to like everyone, but we do need to respect them as beings with whom we share our world. They, too, deserve happiness and good health. When we think about others this way, it can change the way we treat each other. If we think and say kind words to those we don't like, we find ourselves treating them with the same kindness. The trick is, we have to do this regularly, not just once or twice. "

Using the now-familiar beginning setup for the meditation, tell the group that you are going to add that piece today. Ask them to think of a being (human or otherwise) they don't like—perhaps someone who hurt their feelings, someone they argue with, or someone who blamed them for something they didn't do. Tell them that when you begin the third round of the meditation, they are to name that person in their heads as they say, "May (name) be safe," and so on.

(Ring bell)

May I be safe May I be happy May I be well May I live in peace

May you be safe May you be happy May you be well May you live in peace
May (name) be safe May (name) be happy May (name) be well May (name) live in
peace
(Ring bell)

When the meditation is complete, allow a moment of silence and then process the experience with the participants. How did that feel? What felt uncomfortable? What felt good and assuring? If they would like to repeat saying the meditation, allow time to do so.

Set aside time to speak with the group after several weeks about the possibility of changes in their feelings, whether toward themselves or others. It may not happen for anyone in your group. But by consistently offering this meditation, you have planted the idea of dignity and respect for all in an explicit, experiential way.

Zazen Meditation

Seated meditations, called “zazen” in the Buddhist tradition, are the most familiar in our culture. For many this means a quiet moment, a brief time to focus inward, often closed by the saying of words or music. Zazen can mean sitting in silence for twenty minutes, an hour, or even for whole days.

This type of meditation is often practiced with yoga. Kripalu yoga came into practice as a balance for meditation. It comes to us from the yogis of India. Yoga is a means by which our bodies can stretch and engage in a physical practice that allows the body to sit again in meditation. Many children and adults can benefit from a few simple yoga postures before sitting in meditation. Yoga postures are a type of body prayer and very helpful with children and other high-energy folks, since it incorporates movement into meditation. There are many resources available for using yoga with children. Within your own congregation there are probably several people who practice yoga. Start there.

Beginning the Practice

Invite children or youth to engage in the practice of Zazen meditation, which is centuries old. Ask them to find a comfortable position to sit in; let them know they will be sitting this way for a few minutes. If the group has difficulty settling down, offer a few yoga postures, deep breathing, and stretching to ready them.

Tell them about this practice of meditation. You might explain: “People use it to help clear their minds and to find a quietness within themselves. It allows us to listen to our hearts beating and feel our lungs expand and contract with air. It helps us remember that we are alive; our bodies need attention as well as our brains. Some people think that after meditation, they are better able to think and solve problems.”

Light a candle. Invite the group to look into the flame to help them focus inward. Dim the lighting if possible. Tell them that you will soon ring a bell or chime, and when it is silent the meditation time will begin.

Ring bell/chime to begin.

Ask them to breathe in and out (slowly) several times. Say something like: “Can you hear your breath? Can you feel how your tummy rises and falls as you breathe? Listen, breathe—in and out, in and out. Listen very carefully; try to keep your brain free from thoughts.”

“If you cannot keep from thinking, look into the candle flame. Concentrate by looking at the flame. Do you see the different colors of the flame? Keep breathing, in and out. Close your eyes and breathe.”

Say something like “I am going to stop talking now, so that we can listen more carefully to our breath. Please stay still and breathe until you hear the bell/chime ring.”

Ring bell/chime.

Ask the group to stretch out their legs and their arms, roll their heads, and open their eyes. Bring the group to a standing position.

Tell them to clasp hands over the heart and bow from the waist to the group.

Invite the children or youth to offer a word that describes how they now feel.

Walking Meditation

Walking meditations are probably the most challenging to practice with children. Trying to teach a group to walk mindfully without incident will take time. Give yourself and your group the gift of patience. Walking meditations are practiced most often in silence. They are often used as a bridge between two Zazen sessions to refocus the body and mind after sitting for a long time. The walking meditation often lasts for ten minutes. Use your judgment—ten minutes is a long time for a group of young children.

Beginning the Practice

Ask the participants to remove their shoes.

Tell them you will ring the chime/bell three times; when the third chime fades away, they should all turn facing the same direction (left), and begin walking.

Say: “Walk as slowly as you can. Notice how each step feels in your feet. Notice how your heel lifts off the floor. Are your feet cold? Warm?” Keep talking quietly as the participants walk, reminding them to pay attention to what their feet feel.

Ring a bell/chime to signal the end of this session.

Direct the participants to return to their original spots and sit.

Tell the participants to stretch out their legs, flex their feet, wiggle their toes, and come to standing.

Release the group by asking them to bow. Ask them to place their folded hands over their hearts and bend from the waist toward the entire group.

Invite participants to reflect on the experience.

Walking meditations are best done without readings; however soft music may help the group to move freely. Send them on their way with kindness and blessings. Walking meditation should be included as a regular practice in order for the participants to benefit from it and to understand that meditation is not simply sitting still as a stone.

Meditation: A Tool for All Ages

Expand your options; there are many other ways to meditate. Make room for your ideas and take suggestions from your participants to keep the practice of meditation alive in your group. Communicate with others about why you think these practices are important.

The practice of meditation is a useful tool for all ages. Knowing how to be mindful of one's physical being, finding the space within to truly listen to your heart's songs, listening to your breath, and slowing down just for a few moments are priceless tools for young and old alike. Remember to set aside the time to practice. But be kind to yourself when time does not allow for meditation practices. Simply keep trying. Expect the best from your groups and as time passes, they will expect no less for themselves. So may it be.

Writing Prayers

Tracey L. Hurd, Ph.D.

Introduction & Materials.

It can be very powerful to write prayers with children and youth. The following method, described with permission from and attribution to Rev. Gary Smith, is very simple and works well. You will need newsprint and markers to record ideas. It can be helpful to have the “Five Elements of a Prayer,” written on an extra sheet of newsprint as well.

Step One.

Introduce this activity by explaining, “One way that people express thoughts is through prayers. Prayers have some predictable elements that facilitate graceful expression. We’re going to try this kind of writing now.” Invite questions, and be open. Although one manner of writing prayers is suggested here, participants may choose not to follow the format.

Step Two.

Share the prewritten typography of a prayer below on newsprint or read the elements and have a participant list them on newsprint. Go over the elements of a prayer.

Five Elements of a Prayer

By the Reverend Gary Smith, who acknowledges with thanks, Professor Walter Cook.

Salutation: To whom is the prayer addressed—Spirit of Life, God, Goddess, etc.

Condition: I’m (or We’re) feeling sad, happy, humble, angry, etc.

Please give me: Hope, patience, someone to love, etc.

Please give us: Out to the world, to other, it’s about more than me

Thank you: Gratitude and thanks

Step Three.

Invite participants to write a prayer that is somehow related to a project or a theme with which they have been engaged. Brainstorm each section, writing down ideas and then finally picking the one that “sticks” for the group. Step by step, the group will create a prayer.

Step Four.

Read the prayer aloud. Try reading it together. Enjoy. Share.