



**NEIGHBORHOOD UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH**

Youth Religious Education Participant Handbook

"The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own; Not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own."

~ William Ellery Channing

**Sunday calendar on
the back cover !**



2011-2012

Neighborhood Church is a vibrant and growing congregation dedicated to empowering our members to live lives of service, integrity, and joy.

OUR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST 7 PRINCIPLES

ADULT VERSION

The inherent worth and dignity
of every person;

Justice, equity, and compassion
in human relations;

Acceptance of one another and
encouragement to spiritual growth
in our congregations;

A free and responsible search
for truth and meaning;

The right of conscience and use of the
democratic process within our
congregations and society at large;

The goal of world community with peace,
liberty, and justice for all;

Respect for the interdependent web
of all existence

CHILDREN'S VERSION

Every person is important
and valuable;

All people should be treated fairly;
Be kind in all you do

Our churches are places where
we should accept one another
and learn together;

Each person should be free to search
for what is true and right;

All people have the right to speak out
and vote on things
that matter to them;

We should help build and keep a
peaceful, fair, and free world;

We need to take care of the earth,
the home we share with all living things.



THE SOURCES OF OUR LIVING TRADITION

Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder,
affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and
an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us
to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion,
and the transforming power of love;

Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;

Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love
by loving our neighbors as ourselves;

Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results
of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.

Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life
and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

NURTURING THE SPIRITUAL LIVES OF OUR YOUTH

The familiar saying, “*It takes a village to raise a child,*” is at the heart of our Youth Religious Education philosophy here at Neighborhood. From ministers, to staff, to volunteer teachers, to you the parents, we strive to provide our children with a strong foundation for faith and spiritual growth through their relationships with the church community. As we focus our Religious Education programs on transmitting our faith, your children will be exposed to worship and ritual in many different forms and be encouraged to explore many of those rituals at home.

This year, carefully chosen curriculum will focus entirely on our Unitarian Universalist Identity. Our classes are taught by an incredible team of caring, dedicated **volunteer** teachers. Additionally, our children and youth will experience social justice with occasional Worship/Justice Sundays when all ages come together for worship and a justice related activity. Our Religious Education community (including you) encourages our youth to ask tough questions, create their own spiritual path and participate in the world. We work to foster spiritual awareness and make the events in children’s lives religious occasions.

Nurturing the spiritual lives of our children is our “*Gift of Faith*” to them. I hope you and your family will enjoy this exploration together. As always, I am available to answer questions and/or address concerns. I want to make your child’s experience here a memorable one. I look forward to getting to know all of you and your families and to learning together!

Sara LaWall,
Director of Religious Education

THE FREE AND RESPONSIBLE SEARCH FOR TRUTH & MEANING

At the center of our UU Principles and Purposes, is the phrase: the free and responsible search for truth and meaning. This has guided our Religious Education programs for children, youth and adults since our beginnings. We are the church of the open mind and learning is central to who we are. All UU congregations are places of imagination and curiosity; here we ask the questions of our lives.

A healthy RE program takes all of us, staff and members together. There is nothing more important, or as exciting, or as fun as learning. Neighborhood Church is a place for learning and for growing – for growing our spirits and our minds and our hearts, for expanding our horizons. So be a part of this – keep on learning!

Rev. Dr. Jim Nelson,
Senior Minister

*The mission of the
Youth Religious
Education Program at
Neighborhood Church:*

*NURTURE spiritual
growth;*

*HELP develop personal
religious beliefs;*

*CREATE a foundation for
Unitarian Universalist
Identity;*

*FOSTER trust in
community, church &
humanity;*

*ENCOURAGE living a life
that makes a difference.*

Within the mission of Neighborhood Church and Youth Religious Education, the YRE Committee represents congregational concerns about religious education for children and youth and supports the professional staff in realizing the goals of the program.

Meeting once a month with the Director of Religious Education and the RE Assistant, committee members plan and implement Religious Education Events, support training sessions, serve as a sounding board for staff decision making and act as religious education ambassadors to the greater church community and families.

If you have concerns or comments about programming for children and youth, please contact the Religious Education Staff or a committee member.

Visitors are always welcome, please contact the committee chair to confirm the date and time.

YRE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bruce Austin
Anne Franck
Julie Hiroto
Mara Leppaluoto
Shari Majumder, Chair
Mirna Peterson
Michelle Shechtman
Sue Smrekar
Sandy Solis

STAFF

Sara LaWall
Director, Religious Education
626.449.3470 ext. 19
slawall@uuneighborhood.org

Erika Stallings
Religious Education Program Assistant
626.449.3470 ext. 12
reassistant@uuneighborhood.org

SCHEDULE

Church Year:

September 11, 2011 – June 3, 2012

9:30am – 10:30am* Nursery up to 5th grade

11:30am – 12:30pm* Nursery up to 12th grade

A full Sunday calendar for Religious Education can be found on the back cover of this booklet.

**Lessons can run long. We will put a sign on the door to let you know if the class is running late, but request you pick up your child no later than 15 minutes after the service has ended.*

*When placing a child in YRE, please place them into the same grade level they attend in school.

REGISTRATION

Registration forms are available on the YRE table and the church's website. If you have not done so already, please fill one out for your child(ren). **Registration is required after 3 visits for infants, children and youth.** Mailings and emails describing programming events along with teacher to parent communications are sent **only to those registered.**

To maintain a familiar, comfortable environment and a sense of continuity, **parents are asked to choose one service**, either 9:30am or 11:30am. This way we can be sure of having teachers and children/youth at the same time, every Sunday for every class.

YRE CLASSROOM POLICIES

Below are some of our classroom policies the YRE committee has created over the years.

We also use a detailed policy handbook for all volunteers and staff working with children which can be made available upon request.

ELECTRONICS IN THE CLASSROOM

Any and all hand-held electronic devices will **not be permitted** in the classroom though grade 8. This includes, but is not limited to, the following items: cell phones, iPods, iPhones, Androids, Kindles, etc. Please have your children leave these items at home or in the car for the hour they are in their classes on Sundays.

Should a young person bring one into the classroom, the teacher will ask him/her to place it in a holding bin for the duration of class. Should the young person refuse, a YRE Staff member will be called and the young person will be escorted to the Sanctuary to join his/her parents for the remainder of the service.

MOVIES AND MEDIA FOR JR. AND SR. HIGH YOUTH

Any movies or TV programs that are shown at YRE events will be **consistent with the age of the YRE participants.** For children in grades K-8 we rarely use media during the year unless it is integral to the lesson and curriculum. During the summer we often run programs that explore our UU values in certain movies and television programs.

Movies shown at youth overnights will not include films with MPG ratings of R or NC-17 or any unrated movie that may warrant an R or NC-17 rating. Movies that are rated G, PG or PG-13 do not need approval by parents or the YRE committee.

TV programming will not include TV ratings of TV MA. Programming rated TV Y, TV Y7, TV Y7 FV, TV G, TV PG, TV 14 do not require approval by parents or the YRE committee. If the leadership desires to show an R-rated movie or TV programming rated TV MA, due to an exceptional teaching opportunity, a request may be made to the YRE committee. These events would necessitate parental approval. Once approved, such events must be held outside the regularly scheduled YRE programs and not at sleepovers, Sunday YRE, family camp, etc. These events would necessitate parental approval.

PARENT EXPECTATIONS

NEW FEE STRUCTURE

Families with children or youth in our program are asked to either make a financial contribution (pledge) to the church, or pay a program fee. The fee stands at \$100 per child/youth with a family maximum of \$300 for the year. Should this fee be a financial hardship for any family, a one-year waiver may be requested from either of our Ministers or the Director of Religious Education. If you are new, we encourage you to take your time to get to know us. As such, fees will not apply until the second year of participation in the program.

ATTENDANCE

Come regularly. Children develop a sense of belonging by attending regularly. A child who attends regularly not only gets more out of the curriculum, but also feels more connected to their classmates and the church. Parents who possess an attitude of cheerful expectancy about weekly church school attendance will have fewer difficulties with their children's involvement each Sunday. We hope that your family will make church a priority in your lives.

INVOLVEMENT

Lifelong learning, especially where our youth are concerned is a cooperative venture. We need the help of ALL parents and non-parents to make our program a success. **In order to ensure our success, the expectation is if you have a child or youth in the program, you will volunteer some of your time.** Please fill out the parent commitment form with your registration materials.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO YOUR CHILDREN'S TEACHERS

Teachers are forming relationships with your children and they want to meet you too. The DRE and the staff are also interested in hearing from you. Look over the available literature and follow the activities of your child's class.

YRE COMMITTEE CLASSROOM LIAISONS

Each class will be assigned a YRE Committee member who will serve as a Teacher/Parent Liaison. The role of this liaison is to provide an additional layer of support to teachers while also acting as a communications link between teachers, parents and the DRE.

ARRIVAL AND PICK-UP

In deference to our teachers, please drop children off **on-time, but no earlier than 15 minutes before class start time** and pick them up no later than 15 minutes after the service ends—please do not pick them up early.

CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR

Please help your child observe appropriate behavior at church. We believe children need classrooms where they will be safe and feel respected. Any behavior difficulties will be reported to parents, and together, parents, teachers, and the Director of Religious Education will address any situations.

TRANSITIONS

Whether your child is new to Neighborhood or moving up a grade level into a new class, transitions can be scary. Please prepare your child for this change by talking with them about what to expect, new teachers, new kids in their class etc. Parents are always welcome to stay with their child in the classroom for as long as it takes to make them feel comfortable.

WAYS WE WORSHIP

SECOND SUNDAYS

Children gain an understanding of the ways in which we worship together by attending services in the Sanctuary on the second Sunday of almost every month (Chalice Children – 8th grade). Seated with their families, they join with people of all ages in singing hymns, silent prayer and listening to a story. They are then released to their teachers for a shortened classroom experience. Please see the YRE calendar for specific dates.

INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICES

Throughout the year, we will have Intergenerational services in which the children and youth (Kindergarten – 12th grade) are in the sanctuary for the entire service. These services provide an important opportunity for children to witness first-hand the way their parents worship in the sanctuary when they would usually be in their classrooms. These services tend to be more interactive, plus children and youth have opportunities to co-lead the worship. These services are great for families learning and worshipping together.

WORSHIP/JUSTICE SUNDAYS

Periodically throughout the year, all our children will gather together for youth worship and/or an activity focused around a social justice issue. We want to provide children with the experience of ritual; to learn about the ways in which Unitarian Universalists worship, what it means to be part of a larger faith community and to forge relationships with our ministers and staff.

THEMATIC APPROACH

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST IDENTITY

Our Youth Religious Education Program uses a modified theme-based approach for our Kindergarten through fifth grade classes. We have chosen specific religious themes to be the focus of our entire program and we cycle through them every four years.

This year marks our full year of **UU Identity**. The first set of chosen curricula is part of our Unitarian Universalist Association's new curriculum series designed to nurture UU identity, spiritual growth, and a transforming faith. Best of all, these curricula are available for free, online and are customizable to suit classrooms and individuals. Classes will focus on our UU seven Principles and Sources (see page 1) with the guiding theme of love. We choose curriculum which helps children explore questions like, "What does it mean to be a UU? What do UU's believe? And who are some of our important UU ancestors?" We encourage them to explore how we practice our faith in our lives and in the world. You can view this new online curricula at www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith

We hope this theme-based model provides a greater foundation for our own faith and values as well as an expanded view of the world through a UU lens. New this year, all of our classes use curricula from the Unitarian Universalist Association's new program, *Tapestry of Faith*, which offers congregation free, online, customizable curricula for all levels. Written by UU religious educators with clear lesson plans, a host of activity choices for all learning styles, a faith-in-action component and spiritual preparation for teachers. Parents are provided with a week-by-week curriculum plan as well as **weekly classroom updates** and resources to bring the classroom into the home.

CHILDCARE AND CLASSROOM PROGRAM DISCRIPTIONS

INFANTS & TODDLERS UP TO AGE 2 9:30AM & 11:30AM

Our infants are lovingly cared for in our infant room inside the preschool building. The room has infant friendly toys & books, a pint-sized table & chairs, a quiet room with rocking chairs and cribs. We ask that parents provide their own labeled changing supplies and food if necessary. Parents are welcome anytime. Parents MUST sign their children in and out of class and leave your cell phone number.

PRESCHOOL AGES 2 - 3 1/2 9:30AM & 11:30AM

Preschoolers are encouraged to have fun while learning. Children enjoy crafts, games, books and puzzles. Weather permitting, the children are allowed to play in the outside yard that is enclosed with a secured gate. We ask that parents please provide their own labeled changing supplies and food if necessary. Parents are welcome anytime. Parents MUST sign their children in and out of class and leave your cell phone number.



CHALICE CHILDREN (SENIOR PRESCHOOLERS) AGES 3 1/2 -5 9:30AM & 11:30

CURRICULUM: CHALICE CHILDREN

Following the premise that children learn best through direct experience, *Chalice Children* is designed to nurture children's spiritual growth, creativity and connection to their UU community by involving them in hands-on rituals, simple rhymes, finger plays, games and other activities. Here, young ones are introduced to the Unitarian Universalist chalice, discover the concepts of birth and death, explore the great forces of nature and the difference between animate and inanimate objects and consider how to make choices and overcome difficulties. Parents MUST sign their children in and out of class.

GRADES K – 1 9:30AM & 11:30AM CURRICULUM: LOVE SURROUNDS US & FREE TO BELIEVE

Love Surrounds Us explores all our seven Principles in the context of Beloved Community of family/home, school, and neighborhood. Participants engage in activities that emphasize the love they feel in community. Sessions based on the Principles allow children to articulate their faith in the world. Participants come knowing they are Unitarian Universalists, and leave knowing why, as the Principles help answer the question, "Why do I belong?"

Free to Believe also focuses on our seven UU Principles as starting points for exploring values, beliefs and what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. Lessons will also examine some "big questions" through the perspective of our Unitarian Universalist Sources.

GRADES 2 – 3
9:30AM & 11:30AM

CURRICULUM: LOVE WILL GUIDE US
& FREE TO BELIEVE

Love Will Guide Us encourages participants to learn and seek guidance in life through the lens of our Unitarian Universalist Sources, with an emphasis on love. Together we ask questions such as, "Where did we come from?", "What is our relationship to the Earth and other creatures?", "How can we respond with love, even in bad situations?", "What happens when you die?" Sessions apply wisdom from our Sources to help participants answer these questions. Participants will learn that asking questions is valued in Unitarian Universalism, even as they begin to shape their own answers.

Free to Believe focuses on our seven UU Principles as starting points for exploring values, beliefs and what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. Lessons will also explore our UU Sources through exploration of some of life's "big questions."

GRADES 4 - 5
9:30AM & 11:30AM

CURRICULUM: LOVE CONNECTS
Us & WE BELIEVE

Love Connects Us celebrates important ways Unitarian Universalists live our faith in covenanted community. The sessions explore our legacy, from both Universalism and Unitarianism, of living our connections in loving service, inquiry, and action for social justice. At the same time, the program builds active participants in our faith. Children learn how our actions create a new heritage of connecting in love which will shape the faith of future generations.

We Believe focuses on our seven UU Principles as starting points for exploring values, beliefs and what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist. Lessons will also explore UU historical figures and how they embodied these Principles and shaped our faith.

GRADES 6 - 7
11:30AM ONLY

CURRICULUM:
WINDOWS & MIRRORS

Unitarian Universalism views our members' multiple perspectives as a blessing. In spirit, we embrace the contribution of diversity to our collective ability to pursue truth, fairness, justice and love. In practice, however, we often fail to embrace all the experiences and viewpoints in our communities as respectfully or as wholly as we might. Sometimes, we fail to even see differences among us. We seem most prone to gloss over differences when to acknowledge them requires acute self-examination and may lead to pain, shame, discomfort or guilt.

Windows and Mirrors nurtures children's ability to identify their own experiences and perspectives and to seek out, care about and respect those of others. The sessions unpack topics that lend themselves to diverse experiences and perspectives—for example, faith heritage, public service, anti-racism and prayer.



**GRADE 8
1 1:30AM ONLY**

CURRICULUM: RITES OF PASSAGE:

This program is also known as Coming of Age and honors, celebrates and explores the transition from childhood to youth. Exploring personal beliefs about God, death and the meaning of faith, the curriculum helps our youth bring together all that they have learned and experienced in their lives and at church. The program uses the five elements of initiation, ritual, learning, testing and celebration. This yearlong journey also incorporates tools youth can use to shape their own spiritual journeys.

This bedrock class culminates on Sunday June 3rd 2012, with the presentation of their personal faith statements from the pulpit, a bridging ceremony into the senior high class and an opportunity to become official youth members of the church and sign the membership book.

**SENIOR HIGH—YRUU
YOUNG RELIGIOUS
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS
1 1:30AM ONLY**

YRUU is the denomination's title for self-directed, youth-empowering groups made up of senior high students. With the guidance of adult advisors, this group empowers teens to create their own vision and mission for their program. Largely discussion-based, YRUU also takes part in social justice projects, organizes social gatherings, and will plan and lead a Sunday worship service for the congregation. This is an opportunity for youth to continue where the Rites of Passage program left off, as they and their advisors explore what it means to be young and UU, how our UU principles inform how we live our lives, and what power young UU's have to change the world.

**OWL (OUR WHOLE LIVES)
OFFERED TO 1ST GRADE,
4TH-5TH GRADES, 7TH-9TH GRADES ,
SENIOR HIGH AND ADULTS**

Our Whole Lives is a series of sexuality education curricula for multiple age groups. OWL is a positive, comprehensive, and age-appropriate educational program that promotes sexual health and is informed by the guidelines of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS).

Our Whole Lives helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. It equips participants with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture.

Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, Our Whole Lives provides not only facts about anatomy and human development, but helps participants to clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.

Once this class begins, it will be a closed class. **A separate permission registration form will be offered. There is a mandatory parent meeting before each class begins.**

The 1st grade program is 10 weeks beginning in March 2012.

The 4th-5th grade program is 10 weeks beginning in March 2012.

The 7th-9th grade program will be during the 9:30 service beginning with an overnight in February 2012.

For more information, please contact Sara LaWall, DRE, at slawall@uuneighborhood.org

CHILD CARE PROGRAM

Our Child Care program has several goals. The first and most important is to provide a safe, warm, inviting and supportive atmosphere that both parents and children will enjoy. Our second goal is to encourage independence, creativity, and a sense of discovery and exploration. Each child will be encouraged to grow and find new ways to have fun and feel secure in new relationships.

The staff, supervised by our RE Assistant, include a number of paid caregivers and occasionally youth or adult volunteers from the congregation. Child Care is a program administered with a warm and caring spirit. NUUC is pleased to provide this service and parents are encouraged to participate as volunteers or visitors any time. **If you are interested in assisting in the Child Care program, please contact the RE Assistant.**

DROP OFF TIMES: Please do not drop off your children more than 15 minutes prior to the service. Infants and crawler/toddlers may be brought to the North side of the Preschool building. Preschoolers (age 3 1/2 to 5) may be brought to the South side of the Preschool Building where the play structure is located.

PICK-UP TIMES: Please pick up your child by 10:45am after the first service and 12:45pm after the second service. This gives our Child Care providers time to re-set the classroom.

AGE GUIDELINES: Infant and crawler/toddler care is for children up to age 2. Children ages 2—3 1/2 join our preschool class and older pre-K children (ages 3 1/2—5) will be part of our Chalice Children class. Older children, including siblings of infants/toddlers should attend the class with children their own age and with age appropriate activities. We request that parents adhere to this guideline as too many older children take away from the care of our infants and toddlers.

FOOD AND CHANGING SUPPLIES: Please provide our caregivers with your child's own changing supplies, food and drink (if needed). Please make sure all bags and drink containers are **well labeled** so we can prevent the sharing of bottles and sippy cups.

MEETINGS & EVENTS: We are committed to providing childcare for church meetings and events as long as you let us know your needs. **Please reserve space for your child by calling the RE Assistant at least one week prior to the event, please include the number of children and their ages.**

CHILD CARE CONTACT: Erika Stallings, RE Program Assistant
reassistant@uuneighborhood.org

CHILDCARE STAFF:
Evelyn Espinoza & Adela Jimenez, Infants/Toddlers
Cathy Jimenez & Claudia Zaragoza, Preschool
Vivien Hoang, Chalice Children



**NEIGHBORHOOD UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST CHURCH**

Youth Religious Education
Calendar 2011 - 2012
Subject to change

SEPTEMBER

- 4 Final Summer Service at 10am
- 11 **Intergenerational Welcome Back Service
(no classes K-12)**
- 18 Classroom Sunday, Welcome Back Picnic
- 25 Classroom Sunday

OCTOBER

- 2 Classroom Sunday
- 9 Classroom Sunday
(Begin in church service for story)
- 16 Classroom Sunday
- 23 Classroom Sunday
- 30 Classroom Sunday

NOVEMBER

- 6 Classroom Sunday
- 13 Classroom Sunday
(Begin in church service for story)
- 20 **Intergenerational Service
All in Sanctuary – Apple Communion &
Child Dedications (No classes K-12)**
- 27 Thanksgiving weekend—one service 10am
Worship/Justice Sunday, all youth in Chapel

DECEMBER

- 4 Classroom Sunday
- 11 Classroom Sunday
Yule Logs, no story
- 18 **Intergenerational Holiday Pageant
(No classes K-8th)**
- 25 ONE Service 10am
(Holiday Break, no classes K-12)
No childcare

Families will be provided a copy of their child's Sunday by Sunday curriculum plan which outlines specific lesson topics for each class.

JANUARY

- 1 ONE service 10am (no classes)
- 8 Classroom Sunday
(Begin in church service for story)
- 15 Classroom Sunday
- 22 Classroom Sunday
- 29 Classroom Sunday

FEBRUARY

- 5 Classroom Sunday
- 12 Classroom Sunday
(Begin in church service for story)
- 19 Classroom Sunday
- 26 Classroom Sunday

MARCH

- 4 Classroom Sunday
- 11 Classroom Sunday
- 18 ONE Service 10am— *Canvass Sunday*
Worship/Justice Sunday, all youth in Chapel
- 25 Classroom Sunday - Senior High Service
(4th - 8th grades attend service)

APRIL

- 1 Classroom Sunday
- 8 **Easter Intergenerational Service
(No classes K-12)**
Egg hunt after services
- 15 Classroom Sunday
- 22 **Earth Day, All Youth Activity (K-8)**
- 29 Classroom Sunday

MAY

- 6 Classroom Sunday
- 13 Classroom Sunday
(Begin in church service for story)
- 20 Classroom Sunday
- 27 **Intergenerational Service
All in Sanctuary - Flower Communion**

JUNE

- 3 Final Classroom Sunday
(8th Grade ROP Service **no classes 4 – 12**)
- 10 One Service at 10am, Annual meeting
at 11:15, followed by Juneteenth BBQ
- 17 Summer Activity One Service 10 am