

2011-2012 Religious Exploration For Children and Youth Handbook



Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast

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Danielle Bannister, Director of Religious Exploration

Letter from the Minister

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Religious Education Program of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast. You will find here a safe faith community for your children where respect, openness, and caring are an integral part of our relationship and covenant with one another.

While we do not have specific doctrines or creeds, and we do not proselytize, we do value the Principles and Sources to which all Unitarian Universalist churches subscribe. Thus, we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of all people, the common search for truth, and the interdependent web of all existence. We draw from numerous traditions, including various religious, philosophical, wisdom, and spiritual traditions and practices. It is these Principles and Sources that provide the focus for all our curricula, allowing our children to enjoy many years of exciting, relevant, and meaningful religious education—and lots of fun. (Our Principles and Sources are listed at the end of this handbook.)

None of this would be possible, however, without the competence, expertise, and dynamism of our Director of Religious Education, Danielle Bannister. She, along with the guides (our teachers), and the Lifespan Religious Education Committee make our children's program a vibrant, creative endeavor which is key to the well-being of our congregation as a whole. For our future truly lies with our children.

We hope you and your children feel at home with us.

With a warm welcome,

Deane M. Perkins, Minister

Letter from the Director of Religious Exploration (DRE)

This year marks my fifth year as your DRE and I have lots of new and exciting things planned, as this handbook will highlight.

If your child(ren) are returning to RE this year, Welcome Back! If this is your first time, Welcome, Welcome! If, after reading through this Handbook any of you have questions, concerns or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will be happy to talk with you. My contact information can be found in this handbook. You can also contact any of the members of the Life Span Committee, or our Minister.

Here's looking toward a wonderful and peaceful year!

Danielle Bannister, DRE

What does a Typical Sunday look like?

All children are invited to attend the first part of each Sunday service in the sanctuary unless other activities are planned. This portion of the service consists of welcoming newcomers, the lighting of the chalice, opening words, the first hymn and the Story for All Ages. For the story, children and youth are invited to sit at the front of the sanctuary so that they can hear and see the story better. After the story is finished, the congregation sings the children out of the sanctuary and to their RE classes. Once church is over, children and youth in the Intermediate and COA groups may meet their parents downstairs in the hospitality room. Parents of children in the infant/toddler room and primary rooms are asked to pick their children up directly from the RE classroom promptly after the service.

Parents of very young children may bring their children directly to the infant/toddler room before the service begins if they wish. Parents are responsible for the supervision of their children as soon as they have picked them up or when their children arrive for hospitality hour.

Occasionally, the church will have “Intergenerational” services. During these services, there is no RE and the children/youth stay in the sanctuary for the entire service. These services generally have lots of child/youth participation.

Mission Statement for the Religious Exploration Program for Children and Youth

“Our mission is to foster compassionate, connected, reverent, hopeful children and youth who are engaged citizens, grounded by the UU Principles.”

**Adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast Life Span Education Committee, 2008*

Those interested in becoming a guide, or a guide assistant, please contact:
Danielle Bannister at grandchawhe@msn.com or call 342-2096



RE CURRICULA

Free Play Room

Child-care is offered upstairs for infants 6 weeks and older to toddlers to about age three (depending on the child). Two teen child-care providers are always present in the infant/toddler room on Sundays. Additionally, our hospitality room is equipped with speakers and is available for nursing mothers or parents who wish to sit with their children outside of the sanctuary. We also have head sets available from the sound operator sitting in the back of the sanctuary which will allow you to hear the adult service while in the infant/toddler room, if you prefer.

If you do use the infant/toddler room, we ask that you:

*Bring changing supplies. There is a changing table in the room.

*Sit near the back of the sanctuary so that child-care providers can find you if needed. The providers will use good judgment about when to come and get you, but no child will be allowed to cry for an extended period of time.

***Return for your children promptly after the service.**

Primary Room (5-7)

A Discovering Year, By Richard and Tirrell Kimball will help our little ones achieve six goals:

1. To appreciate the worth of each person, including themselves;
2. To work and play cooperatively;
3. To recognize and express their feelings;
4. To explore and celebrate the rich diversity of humankind;
5. To explore and celebrate the natural world; and
6. To discover and express a spiritual dimension

Intermediate Room (Ages 8-10)

This group will work with *The New, You the Creator*, by Richard Kimball. I've used this curriculum a few years ago with great success. The basic message of *You the Creator* is in the title; that your children should be, and are, one of the creative forces of the world. Each Sunday your child will explore the creative side of themselves and how that creativity is connected to our UU values.

Coming of Age (Ages 11-14-Middle school)

This is the second and final year for this COA group. This will be the year that they work on their fundraising effort to make their heritage trip to Boston, learn more about their UU Heritage and continue the work they began last year under the *Coming of Age* Curriculum. Youth in this group *must* be in middle school and *must* be willing to commit to regular attendance.

Youth Group (Ages 15-18-High school)

This group meets for a wide range of activities and projects determined by the group, as the youth's schedules allow. Opportunities may arise to participate in Northern New England District youth activities.

2011-2012 RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION REGISTRATION FORM

The information provided on this form will be permission for participation in the Religious Exploration (RE) Program. It also provides us with vital information for getting in contact with you. Finally, it helps us place your child in the age appropriate group and plan a RE Program that best fits your family and the church as a whole.

Names of Child(ren)	Age and Birthday	Grade (or equivalent)

Parent's Name(s): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ **Cell Phone** _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Does your child have any allergies (food or otherwise?) _____

Does your child have any special needs with regard to physical ability, medical concerns, developmental delays, or other issues the guides should know about? _____

May the Director of Religious Exploration share this information with the Adults who will be working with your child? _____

My child(ren) may attend planned activities of the Religious Exploration Program at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast. I understand that I will be informed of any activities outside of the regular RE meeting place prior to the activity. My emergency contact person may arrange emergency medical care if I am not available.

 Signature Date

 Printed Name Emergency Contact Name

Emergency Contact Number(s) _____

Other information we should know? _____

THE CHILDREN'S VERSION OF THE 7 UU PRINCIPLES & 6 SOURCES

Below is a list of our UU values. These are the messages behind all of our RE Sessions.

7 PRINCIPLES

- 1) Each person is important.
- 2) Be kind in all you do.
- 3) We are free to learn together.
- 4) We search for what is true.
- 5) All people need a voice.
- 6) Build a fair and peaceful world.
- 7) We care for the Earth.

6 SOURCES

- 1) The mystery and wonder of life;
- 2) Leaders and teachers who show us how to be kind and good;
- 3) Wisdom from religions around the world;
- 4) Jewish and Christian teachings that we should love our neighbor as ourselves;
- 5) Our own ability to think and understand the world; and
- 6) The earth and all the goodness of nature.