

**2016-2017**  
**Religious Exploration For**  
**Children and Youth Handbook**



**Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast**  
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**Danielle Bannister,**  
**Director of Religious Exploration**  
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## **Letter from the Minister**

Dear Parents,

This is an exciting year for us at church. We are undergoing a large renovation of our building so that we can have more space to meet our needs. The whole process started some years ago when Danielle informed the Council that the space for our children was simply not adequate. So here we are—in a lovely elementary school holding services and religious exploration classes as we completely renovate the church building.

We hope to return to our own building in the spring. Meanwhile, our programming for children and youth continues as usual—vibrant, fun, respectful, open, caring, and safe. As a liberal faith that values the inherent worth of all people, we teach our children about our seven Principles and six Sources. In these RE classes the children often find close friendships and a sense of community and belonging.

Whatever building we are in, whatever transitions or changes we experience, our congregation remains committed to the well-being of our children. We honor their spirit and their uniqueness.

Your children will be under the guidance of the Director of Religious Education, Danielle Bannister, and guides (teachers) and mentors (in middle school) throughout the year. They all have big hearts and will welcome you and your children with open arms. Come join us!

With a warm welcome,  
Rev. Deane Perkins

## **Letter from the Director of Religious Exploration (DRE)**

This makes year TEN for me as your DRE. Ten years! The average stay for a DRE is -2 years in the US. How scary is that?! I think I got really lucky here. The energy this church provides and the dedication it has to the children's program is the reason that I haven't burnt out and moved on to less stressful pastures.

This year will prove to be a challenging one for our families. We are in a new temporary home and, come spring, will need to make the transition into our new church home. Lots of change. One way we can keep any feelings of anxiety about the change at bay is to bring them to church. Let them see their friends, even if it is a new space. The bonds they make will only be stronger as a result. Now is not the time to take the year off while the church rebuilds. Now is the time to rebuild from within, to make new connections and old ones more meaningful.

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 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 inside this handbook. You can also contact any of the members of the Lifespan Advisory Team or our Minister.

Danielle Bannister, DRE

# CONTACT INFORMATION

## MINISTER

Rev. Deane Perkins [minister@uubelfast.org](mailto:minister@uubelfast.org) 338-4482

## DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION (DRE)

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## LIFESPAN ADVISORY TEAM

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## Registration

**Please** complete the registration form, found at the end of this handbook, and return it your child's RE guide or the DRE. *Parents are asked to share any information about special needs such as allergies and physical or developmental challenges with the guides, and on the registration form. The registration form also provides us with the important information about your children's emergency contact information.* A first aid kit is always available and parents are called to the class when their child needs medical or parental attention.

## Attendance

We realize that families cannot attend church every Sunday, but we do **strongly urge** you to have your child attend as consistently as possible. Classes are structured to support and complement your work as your child's primary religious educator. Regular attendance is vital in strengthening that connection. Consistent participation also fosters a sense of community with each class and encourages the growth of friendships that can last a lifetime.

## I'm new to RE. What does a Typical Sunday look like?

All children are invited to attend the first part of each Sunday service in the temporary-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 temporary-sanctuary so that they can hear and see the story better. After the story is finished, the congregation sings the children out of the temporary-sanctuary and to their RE classes. Once church is over, children in the RE classes will join the others for hospitality hour. *Parents of children in the Infant/toddler room AND the Primary Room are asked to pick their children up promptly after the service.*

Parents of children of infant/toddlers may bring their children to childcare before the service begins if they wish. We have two child care providers ready from 9:50 until the end of the service. Please come for your children after the service and before hospitality hour. **Our providers are only compensated for one hour of their time.** Parents are responsible for the supervision of their children after they are picked up from childcare.

Occasionally, the church will have “Multigenerational” services. During these services, there is no RE and the children/youth stay in the temporary-sanctuary for the entire service. These services generally have lots of child/youth participation. Child care in the infant/toddler room is still typically available for those services.

## I keep hearing the words Guides and Mentors. What are they?

The RE program uses the term ‘guide’ instead of teacher since we feel we are guiding the children and youth along the spiritual path they want to follow. There are two guides for every classroom to meet our Safe Congregation needs and guides are always needed. If you enjoy working with children and would like to volunteer one Sunday a month to help, please contact Danielle Bannister or anyone on the Lifespan Advisory Team.

We also use Mentors in our Coming of Age (COA) program. Mentors pair up with a youth from the program, attend retreats at the church and talk openly with the youth about their faith journey and how they came to find what they believe in. A mentor works with the DRE and the other guides in the program to help them discover what religious path they want to follow, if any, and help them work through the tough questions about our faith and the world around them. Please talk to Danielle if you would be interested in becoming a mentor either this year or in future years.



# ROOM DESCRIPTIONS

## Child Care Room (children up to age 4)

Child-care is offered for infants 6 weeks and older to toddlers to about age four (depending on the child). Three child-care providers are always present in the infant/toddler room on Sundays. 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 right side of the temporary-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 (Grades Pre-K to Grade 2)

We will continue using our Spirit Play baskets as those are easily portable and designed to be heard more than once. Those unfamiliar with Spirit Play, it is a story told using a box of small visual aids. Each story focuses on one of our 7 Principles or our 6 Sources. Parents of children in this room are asked to come and pick their children up after the service is over.

## Intermediate Room (Grades 3-5)

We will be working on the UUA Curricula: SIGNS OF OUR FAITH: BEING UU EVERY DAY by Jessica York. As UU's we are "charged to think about religion as the practice of being faithful to what you love. In order to do this, you must decide what you love and do your best to live that love faithfully every day. Signs of Our Faith guides children to do their best to live faithful lives every day. It presents fourteen traits or values that most Unitarian Universalist love, including the quest for knowledge, reverence for life, supporting one another on our faith journeys, and public witness. Children examine how their lives do and can exhibit these traits and values, and come to understand that their faith is a living faith whose histories and teachings are fortifications for living faithfully in a complex world."

\*Jessica York

## COA (Coming of Age: Grades 6-9)

Because of the tight space where we can basically only sit, I have chosen a curricula that will work well with our situation. It's called The Fifth Dimension by Karen Hager. It's a curriculum based on the television series "The Twilight Zone." The author says: "Competing for a youth's attention can be difficult today. Widespread television viewing, video game playing, and internet surfing has created an environment where youth need visual stimulation to maintain interest. Pop culture can help to channel this environment into a learning opportunity, allowing youth to examine ethical and theological issues, while having fun. In addition, pop culture can help youth to discuss important social issues with peers. Talking about social issues with peers can be daunting, particularly if the youth lives and goes to school in a conservative atmosphere and knows that his/her viewpoint is not necessarily shared by the majority of his/her peers. Referencing a television show, a movie, a song, or a website can help youth express their opinions to others." Since our class time is limited to about 35 min each Sunday, one Sunday will be devoted to watching the episode and the following one will be discussing it, so classes will build upon another. I think this will be lots of fun!

## **YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists: High School)**

This group will be meeting in the Belfast Center (red and white building) on the first Sunday of the Month from 3:30-5:30. We talk about broad topics including current news events and how we can work to make change, discuss service projects and work on leadership skills. We also have snacks and have fun too.



### **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 Lifespan Education Committee, 2008

### **Clynk Bags**

An easy way to help our RE program is by picking up some of the green Clynk bags that we have available in the office and on most Sunday's. Simply place your returnables into the bag and scan the bag at Hannaford. Those funds are deposited into a special fund used for our snack for RE. Many of our children have food allergies. These snacks are a bit more costly and the Clynk bags help offset the cost of the snacks our children can eat safely.

Any questions can be directed to the DRE at: [dre@uubelfast.org](mailto:dre@uubelfast.org)



- 1. EACH PERSON IS IMPORTANT.**
- 2. BE KIND IN ALL YOU DO.**
- 3. WE ARE FREE TO LEAN 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 OUR PLANET.**

**UU CHURCH OF BELFAST RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION**  
**INFANT/CHILD/YOUTH REGISTRATION 2016-2017**

**PLEASE TEAR THESE PAGES OFF AND EITHER MAIL, OR GIVE TO DRE**  
**You can also fill this form out online on our website and here: <http://bit.ly/2aUCluB>**

**Part I: Family Information**

**Parent(s)/Guardian(s)**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ **Cell:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Parent(s)/Guardian(s) (If applicable)**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ **Cell:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Infant(s)/Child(ren)/ Youth through Grade 12:**

**Full Name** **Age as of Sept. 2016** **Grade in Sept. 2016**

Full Name	Age as of Sept. 2016	Grade in Sept. 2016

**Allergies, medical, and/or other issues:** Please provide any information that will help us ensure a safe classroom experience; i.e., medical, hearing/vision/attention difficulties, or personal concerns. *Please indicate which child is being described.*

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**Emergency Contact:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Home Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cell Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email/other:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Part II: Permissions

I give UU Church of Belfast staff or volunteers permission to release the above information about my child(ren) to medical authorities and to obtain **medical treatment** when I cannot be reached or when delay would be dangerous to my child's (children's) health.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

2. I give UU Church of Belfast staff or volunteers permission to **post photographs** of my child(ren) on the church's web site or in other public venues under the condition that my child(ren) will **not** be individually identified.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part III: Family Commitment (We really need some help this year!)

Our program relies on the help of many hands to make light work. How can *you* help foster the spiritual growth of our children? (Please check as many boxes as you wish)

- I am already helping RE this year as a Guide/Mentor or on the Lifespan Advisory Team
- I would like to help out in the Child Care Room once a month. (This is a PAID job of \$10.00 per Sunday)
- I would like to volunteer as a Guide one Sunday a month (The DRE will contact me with more info)
- I can't commit to one Sunday a month, but you could add me as a substitute!
- I would like to help with the Children's Choir (Yes, we're gonna try to form one)
- I would like to join the Lifespan Advisory Team (We meet once a month on a Wednesday morning)
- I would like to join the Task Force (This group helps out on short term projects that come up)
- I really can't commit to anything at the moment.