

# Connections

## Religious Education 2009-2010



First Unitarian Church of Rochester  
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**Sheila Schuh, Director of Religious Education**

Welcome to our program of religious development for children and youth at First Unitarian Church! Simply put, we are about connections- strengthening and building them across all ages, within your family home, to our Unitarian Universalist heritage, to our inner voice, to the many gifts around us, and to needs greater than our own.

We take the root meaning of religion seriously! *Re-ligio* means to bind back, to re-bind the sacred whole. In a culture that can tug at family time and values, ours is a communal bond of hope where we find strength and courage to be spiritual guides for our children.

Heavily based in the arts with integrated social justice education and action opportunities, the offerings for young people you'll find herein provide an avenue for developing a relational self with a consistent invitation to listen: Who am I as a Unitarian Universalist, and what are my gifts? What is life-giving and most important? How can I serve the greater good?

Finding inspiration from nature, sacred stories and practices from world religions, the lives of prophetic men and women, and everyday experiences of wonder and love, we aim to give our children and youth a wide source of nurturing. Our hope is that they will carry the light of our faith with openness, confidence, and powerful living.

Come join the joy!

*Sheila*

**Our Program Mission**

We offer the world a religious education ministry which ensures that children & youth emerge from our church community with a clear UU identity and the displayed ability to listen to their deepest selves, be open to life's gifts and serve needs greater than their own. We achieve this through a rich array of programming that includes:

- ✓ experiential learning and engagement in the arts
- ✓ attention to child and youth developmental needs
- ✓ engagement in monthly all-church spiritual themes
- ✓ empowerment of parents as their child's primary spiritual guides who model and nurture connected ways of living amidst modern culture.
- ✓ regular worship and small group experience
- ✓ active participation in social action to further our congregation's shared social justice
- ✓ priorities

In our Religious Education program for children and youth, we strive to lift up the principles and sources of our faith.

We the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- ❖ 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 the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- ❖ The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- ❖ Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The living tradition we share draws from many sources:

- ❖ 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.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

**Infant through Preschool**

**Nursery, 9:30 & 11:15**

(0 to ~12 months)

Our very youngest Unitarian Universalists are cared for by nurturing adults. Safety, parent confidence, and lots of TLC are our priorities.

**Toddler Room 9:30 & 11:15**

(~12 months to ~ 2 ½ years)

Individualized attention, with appropriate playthings and activities, helps our toddlers feel comfortable with us and with each other. Outdoor play in our enclosed playground area is very popular with this group.

**2 ½ to 3 ½ years, 9:30 & 11:15**

The *Celebrating Me and My World* curriculum provides these preschoolers with experiences and opportunities to grow in their sense of trust and caring. The program also helps to develop their self-identity and feeling of connectedness with all of life.

**3 ½ to 4 years, 9:30 & 11:15**

The *Chalice Children* curriculum is designed to help young children learn about their church. Children gain a sense of belonging to their religious community through experiences that enhance their natural spirituality.

**Parents are encouraged to help decide when their children are ready for moving up and more structure. Please note however, that curriculum may repeat in subsequent years, and groupings may depend on numbers of participants. This year we aim to have a paid staff in each group to ensure consistency and quality of care at every level.**

**K-5<sup>th</sup> : Workshop Adventure – NEW!****What is Workshop Adventure?**

Workshop adventure is a model of religious education that involves rotation to multi-media rooms to encourage children to engage sacred stories in different ways. The model was considered and chosen in visioning sessions at First Unitarian in 2008-2009 because of a hunger among families and children for a more experiential, fun way of learning.

**How does it work?**

Children will gather in Gilbert Hall each week with adult “travelers” and workshop leaders for a short worship (about 15 minutes) that engages our children in the monthly all-church worship theme by connecting it to a sacred story from a world religion or ethical tale. Children will depart from Gilbert Hall and travel to a designated workshop room (Theater, Art, Music/Voice/Writing, Science/Nature, Movement, Faith Footsteps) with their age group. There, the workshop leader will guide them through an experiential exercise to help them explore more deeply to the theme/story as it relates to them as Unitarian Universalists.

Each group will have an identity (i.e. “Home Helpers”) that will serve as a way for travelers and workshop leaders to call to mind an emerging developmental need.

- *Home Helpers*: to care for the people and places we call home, including our body homes
- *UU Sleuths*: to seek answers to questions, to think before acting
- *Web Walkers*: to be mindful of our connections with others and how our choices effect the web of life
- *Peace Makers*: to choose peaceful ways of resolving differences and find peace in ourselves
- *UU Risk Takers*: to take chances to live our principles in the world
- *Earthlings*: to affirm diversity, the here and now, and one’s unique gifts for the world.

**Workshop Adventures continued...**

Here is how the groups play out at our two sessions:

**9:30 Groups**

K Home Helpers  
1st UU Sleuths  
2-3rd Web Walkers  
4th UU Risk Takers  
5th Earthlings/OWL

**11:15 Groups**

K Home Helpers  
1st-2nd UU Sleuths  
3rd Peace Makers  
4th UU Risk Takers  
5th Earthlings/OWL

**5th Grade**

*Our Whole Lives: Human Sexuality Education for 4th-6th Graders* will be conducted in the spring of 2010. This curriculum supports the “three Rs” of childhood sexuality education: Respect, Relationships, and Responsibility. Some of its goals are:

- to help families communicate openly about all life questions.
- to help children learn to make responsible decisions that show respect for themselves and others.

**Program Offerings for Junior & Senior High****9:30 Offerings****6th-8th Grade***Doing Plays*

By bringing a story to life through drama, we explore its meaning for us and our values. *Doing Plays* will give young adolescents the opportunity to learn, adapt, and perform stories relating to our monthly worship themes and Unitarian Universalist principles. Performance venues will include adult and children’s worship, church events, and possibly a social action event. In addition to the explicit learning that occurs through the stories, participants experience teamwork and the fun of creativity.

**9th-12th Grades**

Worship or serve as a Youth Mentor High schoolers attending at 9:30 are welcome to attend worship or may inquire with Sheila about assisting with younger groups. Please see the following page for information about our 11:15 High School offering, Evening Youth Group, and Teen Soul Matters.

**11:15 Offerings****6th-7th Grade**

*Doing Plays* see description above.

**6th-8th Grade**

*(Sept. - Dec.) Amazing Grace: Exploring Right and Wrong* intends to help young adolescents understand right and wrong and act on their new understanding. Its purpose is to equip them for moving safely and productively through the middle- and high school years, when they will be continually tugged toward both ends of the ethics continuum. Through their involvement in *Amazing Grace*, youth will come to recognize and depend on their Unitarian Universalist identity and resources as essential to their movement toward independence and personal promise.

*(Jan. - May) Messages in Music* will compliment the first half of the year by allowing participants to look at the influences in the culture around them through a UU perspective. Youth share their music and review it as a group. Sheila will integrate sessions on the internet, entertainment, and modern media.

**8th Grade only**

*Our Whole Lives: Human Sexuality Education for 7th-9th Graders* is a program for youth which speaks to their needs today and prepares them for a healthy, happy and meaningful tomorrow. The title, "Our Whole Lives," was chosen to emphasize at least two underlying values of this program. First, that sexuality is an important part of a healthy, whole (complete, holistic) life. And, that there are other layers of meaning as well, such as the fact that we receive messages about sexuality throughout "our whole lives." The complete OWL curriculum offers:

- ❖ effective group-building to create a safe and supportive peer group which enhances communication skills.
- ❖ a religious dimension: values clarification, personal ethics, and application of our UU Principles to enforce responsible, respectful behavior.
- ❖ a parent orientation session and specially trained leaders.

**Special notes to parents of 8th graders:**

- ❖ *OWL* is open only to students who have regularly attended our church school program in at least one of the last two years. Exceptions may be considered by contacting the Director of RE.
- ❖ Because of the sensitivity of the material, consistency and trust-building in the classroom are imperative. It is our expectation that students enrolling in this class will miss no more than three classes throughout the year.
- ❖ New students and those unable to commit to regular attendance should register for *Amazing Grace/Messages* (for 6th to 8th graders).

**9th-12th Grades**

*Exploring Our Values through Poetry: A Tapestry of Faith Workshop Program for Youth (Sept.-Dec.)* Get ready for poems on stage and a poetry slam! Poetry can be an accessible and profound tool in our spiritual practice as we journey toward becoming more conscious as human beings and as Unitarian Universalists. We'll check out poems and work with themes of beauty, tough times, nature, hope and hopelessness, the afterlife, and the tenderness of the human condition.

(Jan.- May) TBA based on participant feedback. Choices will include *Neighboring Faiths*, *Small Group Ministry*, *Families*, and others.

**Additional Options for Teens****Sunday Night Youth Group**

Our *Youth Group*, open to all high schoolers, meets weekly from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. on Sundays. Our volunteer advisors and student minister will involve our high schoolers in community-building, social action, and worship experiences. This is a drop-in program: come once in a while or every week! We anticipate a strong core of "regulars."

**Teen Soul Matters - New!**

Are you between 13 and 18 and looking for a deeper connection to your spirituality? Do you have big questions, or are forming your spiritual path? Join a new *Teen Soul Matters* group. Similar to adult groups, topics are built around the monthly worship themes. Resources such as *Popcorn Theology* and *Neighboring Faiths* will be used to encourage exploration of spiritual practice and knowledge of various faiths. Commitment to regular attendance, trying spiritual practices, and doing assigned readings is essential. Third Sundays at 1 p.m.

**Important Dates****Saturday, September 12**

Volunteer Training

**Sunday, September 13**

Intergenerational Worship Service; No Program except Youth Group, Children's choir begins

**Sunday, September 20**

RE Program begins

**Sunday, November 29**

No Program

**Sunday, December 27**

No Program

**Sunday, January 3**

Special Programming for K-5

**Sunday, February 21**

Special Programming for K-5

**Sunday, April 4**

Special Programming for K-5

**Sunday, May 23**

Youth Sunday/ Appreciation/ Program ends

**Sunday, May 30**

Fun!

**Sunday, June 6**

Children's annual meeting

**Sunday, June 13**

Children's music

**Sunday, June 20**

Intergenerational Worship Service

### Monthly Spiritual Challenge & Small Group

This year your family can take up the challenge of a *Spiritual Families Assignment* based on our monthly worship themes. (These assignments will arrive each month in the family ministry news via email!) You can do them with your family alone, or go one step deeper with Rev. Kaaren and Sheila at a monthly meeting to process how the exercise went with other families, gain insight into doing similar activities in an on-going way, and gain support for you as your child's primary spiritual guide.

**Who:** Appropriate for parents with K-7<sup>th</sup> graders

**When:** 6:30 to 7:45pm, 3rd Wednesday of the month beginning Oct. 21

**Info:** Light meal provided from 6:00-6:30pm for a small fee. Childcare upon request for younger siblings; K-7 youth invited for related activities.

**Parent Points of Interest:**

Other on-going groups for parents include: UU Moms Night O (UUMNO), Soul Matters for Couples, UU Families in Action

Families can engage in social action efforts by checking the church website for ongoing listings of opportunities to serve.

A parent library is in the works for Room 119. Please email Sheila Schuh (SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org) if you have items to contribute.

**Chair: Tristram Smith** ([tristram@rochester.rr.com](mailto:tristram@rochester.rr.com))

**Members:**

**Tom Hall** ([t.hall.construction@gmail.com](mailto:t.hall.construction@gmail.com))

**Wendy Mancarella** ([wendymance@yahoo.com](mailto:wendymance@yahoo.com))

**Lorie Scheer** ([scheer\\_family@mac.com](mailto:scheer_family@mac.com))

**Nancy Anton** ([nlanton@yahoo.com](mailto:nlanton@yahoo.com))

**Adam Uzelac** ([voiploser@gmail.com](mailto:voiploser@gmail.com))

**Tess MacFarland** ([tess@rochester.rr.com](mailto:tess@rochester.rr.com))

**Ex Officio: Sheila Schuh** ([sheilas@rochesterunitarian.org](mailto:sheilas@rochesterunitarian.org))

Committee meetings are generally held on the first Wednesday of every month (except July) from 7 to 9 p.m. These meetings are open to all members and friends of the congregation. If you wish to bring up a matter for discussion, please contact Sheila or Tristram prior to the meeting.

**Staff**

**Scott Tayler**, Parish Co-Minister and Youth Group Oversight

**Kaaren Anderson**, Parish Co-Minister

**Jen Crow**, Associate Minister

**Sheila Schuh**, Director of Religious Education

**Kelly Kilmer Hall**, Religious Education Assistant

**John Barthelmes**, Doing Plays Coordinator

**Alison Bird**, Infant/Toddler Care Coordinator

**Sarah Martin**, Infant/Toddler Care Coordinator

**Hannah Lurye**, Childcare Assistant

**John Attanasio**, Teacher/Childcare Provider for 3 yr. olds

**David Messner**, Ministerial Intern

**Kathleen Rickey**, Youth Social Action

If you are new to our program, I encourage you to visit as a guest three or four times prior to registering your child. (When you first visit, we will ask you to complete a Guest Card so that we have your contact information. This is different from our electronic registration process.)

Also, before you formally enroll your child, I will meet with you (in person or by phone) to explain the philosophy and expectations of our program. I look forward to getting to know our new families!

Our Religious Education program is led by the Director of Religious Education, with guidance from the Religious Education Committee and support from the Religious Education Assistant. Our age-appropriate curriculum materials are designed for use by non-professional, volunteer teachers.

Nearly 100 church members and friends serve as our volunteer teaching staff, receiving training and ongoing support from the Director. For the safety of our children and for their own protection, teachers are required to fill out an application form, provide references, undergo a background check, and sign a code of ethics.

***Religious Education is a cooperative program and part of a larger whole. We ask you to demonstrate your commitment to our program, and to First Unitarian, by signing off on the following expectations as part of the registration process:***

- Strive for consistent attendance, which demonstrates to our children that our faith and religious development are important. I/we understand that building trust and friendship nurtures our common life.
- Do our best to be involved in First Unitarian by making a pledge to support the church operating budget, if able.
- Stay informed by reading the church newsletter and family ministry alerts.
- Consider serving on a teaching team, being a workshop leader or traveler, or using my time and talents in our program, knowing we are all busy and each has an ongoing role.
- Remain in the building while our children are in religious education programs, unless I/we have made specific arrangements with the Director and/or my child's teachers.
- Provide timely feedback (both positive and constructive) in order to help assess and improve the program.

#### **Registration Procedure**

1. *Family Ministry Alert:* If you receive the Family Ministry Alert, you will have already been emailed an electronic registration form with instructions for return.

2. *Email:* Please email Sheila Schuh ([SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org](mailto:SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org)) or Kelly Kilmer Hall ([kkilmerhall@rochesterunitarian.org](mailto:kkilmerhall@rochesterunitarian.org)) to receive an electronic registration form.

3. *Mail:* If you don't have email or computer access, please contact Kelly Kilmer Hall at (585) 271-9070 to receive a paper registration form.



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