

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY

HANDBOOK

Religious Education Program for Children and Youth

Martha Dallas, Director of Religious Education

August 25, 2011

This Handbook is a detailed and comprehensive guide to our Religious Education Program.

HANDBOOK *of the* Religious Education Program
First Unitarian Universalist Society, Burlington, Vermont

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Introduction

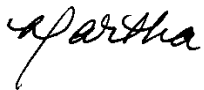
August 25, 2011

Dear RE Friends,

In this Handbook, I aim to include all the details of our RE inner workings, so that any adult who engages here may find answers to most questions in this one reference.

Each year, the RE Handbook is updated and revised. There's a lot of change underway in our program this year; nonetheless, much that is here will be helpful even if some details change. I always welcome your feedback; help me make this a helpful Handbook!

In UU Spirit,



Martha Dallas, Director of Religious Education

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Sunday Mornings at First UU

SUNDAY MORNING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SCHEDULE

First Service: 9 AM

8:30-8:45	Teachers should arrive between 8:30 and 8:45 a.m. to prepare.
9:00	Worship begins in the sanctuary.
9:20	Children are sung out to their classes; classes begin.
10:00	Worship ends and fellowship hour for adults begins.
10:15	RE Classes end and children are dismissed to reunite with their parents.
10:00-11:00	Fellowship hour and social time for families between services.

Second Service: 11 AM

10:30-10:45	Teachers should arrive between 10:30 and 10:45 a.m. to prepare.
11:00	Worship begins in the sanctuary.
11:20	Children are sung out to their classes; classes begin.
12:00	Worship ends and fellowship hour for adults begins.
12:15	RE Classes end and children are dismissed to reunite with their parents.
12:15-12:45	Fellowship hour and social time for families.

JOINING THE ADULTS FOR WORSHIP

Participating in worship is an important part of religious education for children and youth. Here at First UU, between September and May, we offer services at both 9 and 11 AM. Most Sundays, children begin their time with adults for the beginning of the worship service, and about twenty minutes into the service, we sing them to their classes. This allows them to experience several key elements of the worship experience on a regular basis: Call to Worship, Opening Words, Chalice Lighting, Welcome, a Hymn, and the Reflection for All Ages.

PROCEEDING TO CLASSES

Gathering up front for the Reflection for All Ages is intended to help simplify the transition from the sanctuary to the classrooms. Those who are teaching that Sunday should gather with the children in their class for the Reflection. Younger children usually gather on the west side (near the piano) and older children on the east side, the reason being it is safer for larger, faster-moving children to exit first. Especially in September and October, we try to use signs for each class, so children can find their groups more easily. The RE Angel will lead the way out of the sanctuary, and all teachers should model and enforce walking feet for everyone's safety.

Religious Education Program Structure

CLASS GROUPINGS

Children are grouped either as a single grade, or in a two-grade group, depending on the group's anticipated size. Enrollment for classes does not always meet our expectations, so it is not uncommon for the groupings to change after the UU year has begun. We will only split large groups where there is a majority or consensus will do so, and most importantly, enough adults to fill slots in an additional teaching team. When groups split, both continue that year with the same curriculum.

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VACATION SUNDAYS, OTHER SPECIAL SUNDAYS

On Sundays flanking school vacations, children gather in mixed age groups to play games and have fun in a more informal setting. Several other times a year, we have special theme Sundays where, again, ages are more mixed, learning modes are more diverse, and various themes are explored as a large group. We are exploring and experimenting with new and – we hope – more engaging ways of learning and teaching!

MULTIGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

Several Sundays a year, the whole congregation – all ages – worships together for an hour at both 9:00 and 11:00. There is childcare provided in the nursery, but no R.E. classes. These worship services are designed to meet a wide range of ages, needs, and levels of engagement; they bring us together in September and send us forth in June, and help us to celebrate significant rituals and holidays in between.

Support for the RE Program and its Volunteer Stewards

AN R.E. COOPERATIVE

Roughly 150 adult volunteer religious education stewards share in the work of teaching and supporting our children and youth. We ask everyone with children in the program (and some without) to consider a stewardship role they can play. We recognize that some people need to rest and recharge, so we allow for this, trusting that others with fresher energy will step in. We also invite newcomers to take six months to get oriented to our community before taking on an RE stewardship role. We do our best to place people in roles that allow them to express their talents; at the same time we hope some people will be flexible and willing to stretch a bit so that all needs may be filled.

STAFF SUPPORT

Our religious education program is supported by several paid staff. Martha Dallas is a full-time Director of Religious Education, responsible in cooperation with the Religious Education Committee for the educational programming for infants through high schoolers. Kathleen Kemp works full-time as the Society's Administrative Assistant, and a portion of her work is devoted to R.E. Kim Thomas works part-time to coordinate our childcare staff, comprised of adults and teens. They provide coverage in the Nursery on Sunday mornings, as well as at other Society-sponsored events. Kristin Cadwalader is our part-time Youth Programs Coordinator, responsible for adult leadership of our high school Youth Group, and for developing programming for our seventh and eighth graders. Our R.E. Program also receives support from the Society's other full-time staff: Christina Fulton, Administrator, and David McFeeters, Facilities Manager. Rev. Roberta Finkelstein, our Interim Senior Minister, also provides wisdom and support to our programming.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The RE Program is supported by the RE Committee (REC), which works closely with the DRE to set the course of the program. It meets monthly from August – June. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month, from 6:30-8:30 PM at the Meetinghouse. Nonmembers are welcome to attend. Each spring, the Committee recruits for new members to serve for the upcoming year. The Committee tries to balance the presence of new voices with people who can provide more institutional memory. A list of REC members with contact information will be available on our website, www.uusociety.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR OTHER R.E. STEWARDS

The DRE or Administrative Assistant can provide contact info for groups, such as class groups (with parents' names) and teaching teams. This will be available in September, but information is always changing, our intent will be to update it periodically on our website in the members only section. This is password-protected; please contact the DRE if you need to know the password.

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Teachers/Leaders and Teaching/Leading

TEACHING: HOW IT IS SHARED

Each group of children is taught by members of a teaching team. We have outlined the teaching team for those who find it helpful. It is meant to make teaching commitments more predictable and manageable, however some teams prefer to develop their own means of sharing leadership that both meet teachers' scheduling and availability needs, as well as children's needs for safety, comfort, and continuity. First, the church year is divided in half, so that there is a Fall Session and a Winter-Spring Session. This year, we anticipate approximately 8-11 R.E. Sundays per session. NOTE: This is significantly fewer than we've had in the past. Each session has three lead teachers, who share responsibilities on a rotating basis. In addition to these three, a team has a Scheduler-Substitute who serves for one session in the dual capacity of subbing for leads or assistants and coordinating the team's teaching schedule.

TEACHING: WHO AND WHY

Here are a few more points about teaching RE:

- You do not have to teach in your child's class. In some cases, both parents and children are happier in separate rooms!
- We are grateful for the participation of those RE stewards who aren't currently parenting!
- Teens are wonderful additions to teaching teams. Those involved in our Youth Group, however, can only commit at the 9:00 service.
- Burnout can sneak up on you! Be careful not to jump in and "save" your class too many Sundays. Hold back, make room for others to lend a hand, and ask for help when you need it. We want you to enjoy this community for a long time, so find a pace that you can sustain!

LESSON PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Try to look over the lesson the week before you have to teach it. This will give you time to assemble supplies, etc. The DRE will try to check email on Fridays and Saturdays, but can be most helpful to those who are planning in the early part of the week. On Sunday mornings, allow 15-30 minutes to prepare your room for the morning. If you want to have a team meeting, you should allow extra time for this. Since most classrooms are used during both services, First Service meetings should happen before class (the building opens at 8 AM), and Second Service meetings should happen after class (the building closes at 1:30 PM).

SUPPORT DURING THE WEEK

The DRE's office hours are Mon: 1-5, and Tues – Thurs: 9-5. She will try to check email once during Friday-Saturday with an eye for urgent needs. We are working on adding more resources to our website (www.uusociety.org) and to facilitate electronic/virtual connection and support. Many of these will be stored in the members only section, which requires a password. Ask the DRE if you need the password.

SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT, AND RESOURCES

In your classroom you'll find a number of basic supplies. Book baskets are there to supplement some curricula. These are stocked by Rebecca Anderson, our society librarian, and contain a list of the books in your basket. If you're looking for more books, speak with her. There are also basic supply buckets with pens, pencils, tape, scissors, glue sticks, markers, sticky notes, a stapler and a ruler. These should stay in your room. You'll also have paper. Many rooms have additional supplies and resources pertinent to their curriculum.

- In the supply closets you'll find many more supplies, such as glitter, fabric, craft sticks, a TV/DVD player, boom boxes, and much more. The three supply closets are in the Community Room against the north wall, near the ramp to the library. #1 is on the left; it has AV equipment. A few of the boom boxes are new and have ipod docks. #2 has a wide array of craft materials. Take time to see what's in there! #3 is next to the kitchen. It has lots of paper, bulletin board materials, yarn and fabric. Again, take time to familiarize yourself with what's available so you can find what you need quickly. Please try not to use up all of one item, as other classes may need it too. There is a sign-out sheet for the TV/DVD player; please use it if you plan to watch a DVD with your class. Note: a second TV/DVD player is stored in a closet on the second floor near the Susan B. Anthony room. There is a sign-out sheet by that closet for your use.

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- The Henry Berg room (next to last on the right, facing the chalice wall in the Community Room) houses items, including: VHS tapes, board games, and outdoor toys such as jump ropes, hula hoops, balls, and parachutes.
- Purchasing special supplies: The RE office can purchase supplies for you with advance notice. Also, you can buy them and be reimbursed. For expenses under \$20, you can give the receipt to Kathleen in the main office. For expenses over \$20, give the receipt to Martha so she can request that a reimbursement check be cut and sent to you. Copies of our tax-exempt certificate are available at September kick-off events, or can be obtained in the RE office. These should be presented at time of purchase to avoid having to pay tax (we are a 501c(3) organization). We will not reimburse tax paid.
- Using the kitchen: Cooking can be great learning! Remember to sign up for the kitchen if you'll be using it. Sign up is first come, first served, and the sheet is on a wall in the kitchen.
- First UU has wireless internet access for those who would like to use their laptop to access online resources for classroom use. Please speak to the DRE if you would like the access password.
- Each classroom has a copy of the UU Children's Songbook, [Come Sing a Song with Me](#). We are working on recording CDs of these songs for teachers and kids to sing along with during class. Music in the classroom enriches the experience!

SNACK

Parents are expected to take turns providing snack in their children's classes. A snack sign-up sheet is generally distributed in September, and most rooms have these hanging near their classroom door. Please do your part and provide snack periodically. Remember that a number of our children have food limitations and even life-threatening food allergies. We make "no nuts" a practice throughout the RE Program because nut oils can easily get around, are difficult to remove, and are highly dangerous to some of our children. We encourage healthy snacks because food is a teaching tool too! Snacks such as fruit (fresh or dry) and rice cakes are possible for essentially any child to eat.

TEACHING TIPS & CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Managing a group of children, especially when you don't know them all well, can be a challenge. The following general tips can help when you're leading class:

- Make eye contact with the participants because they love the personal contact.
- Smile, be yourself and feel comfortable telling amusing anecdotes because kids love a good laugh.
- Organize all materials in advance because kids sometimes have a hard time waiting.
- Engage kid-helpers to help you set up and distribute materials, samples, pictures, and handouts because kids love to feel important.
- Require that participants raise their hands to participate because they will probably all want to talk at once.
- Call on many different members of the class because everyone wants to be involved.
- Wonder aloud with them. When you don't know something, say so!
- Model good safety practices because kids learn by following role models.
- To quiet the group and get their attention, because it is hard to give good directions unless participants are quiet:
 - Turn the lights off until all are quiet.
 - Stop and wait quietly and patiently for the group to let you continue speaking if they get noisy because they have probably heard the "cold silence" before and know that it means they need to be less noisy.
 - Use the "quiet coyote" symbol, while being quiet yourself, because many children (especially young ones) are familiar with this symbol.
 - Say quietly, "If you can hear my voice, clap once," then clap once. Repeat, adding a clap, until the group is listening to you and clapping in rhythm together.
 - Affirm and name children who are quiet and listening.
 - Issue a challenge: "I wonder how many seconds it will take for everyone to..."
 - Do something out of the ordinary like singing a song or ringing a bell.
- Wait to give handouts to participants until it is time to read or use them because if the students have the handouts while you are speaking they will be distracted.

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- Wait several seconds before calling on participants to answer a question because the whole group needs time to think about the question before someone answers it.
- Praise attentive or helpful behavior because this is the behavior you want to encourage.
- Have a backup plan, and be prepared to change gears if what you'd planned is not going smoothly.
- Remember that everyone learns differently. Try to engage the kids with opportunities for listening and speaking, as well as looking/watching, touching/handling things or doing things, and full-body activities, such as dance, yoga, or movement games.
- Enjoy the kids, their enthusiasm, and their sense of wonder because they have a fascinating perspective on the world, and they will teach YOU again and again!

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS

Please consider each and everyone's inherent worth and dignity when you are faced with a child having a difficult morning. Take care of yourself, and respect the needs of the class, as well as the dignity of the individual. If a child's behavior is compromising the fun, safety, and good learning in your classroom, please seek help from the RE Angel and if needed, ask for his/her help with temporarily removing the child from the class. Also, report difficult situations on your Communication Form without using individuals' names and ask that the DRE follow up with you privately. Please speak with the DRE if there is an ongoing challenging situation; we may be able to identify tricks that will help everyone have a better RE experience.

The following are suggested techniques for intervention with an individual child:

- Check the brightly-colored sheet in the front of your classroom binder to see whether there are any special needs or issues the child's parents have alerted us to. If there are, hopefully you will also see suggestions from them of how to manage the child's particular challenges.
- Silently move yourself into that child's physical space (just being near him/her is often enough to adjust behavior).
- Silently touch that child on the shoulder as you continue to give directions or whatever you are telling the group.
- Separate the child from others who may be "feeding" the disruptive behavior.
- Use "name dropping" while giving directions for a project: e.g. "Now, after cutting this out, Maria, here, will take the glue and do a great job of putting it on like this..."
- Praise the child's behavior if it is currently under some control: "You're doing a good job with keeping your hands to yourself right now."
- Use areas outside the classroom for any timeouts (hallways, Community Room, etc.). The RE Angel can help with this. If needed, the RE Angel may bring with the child to a more neutral space or go for a walk until he/she is ready to return to class.
- Please seek help from the RE Angel or DRE if what you have tried is not working!

SUPPORT WHILE YOU'RE IN THE CLASSROOM

Expect the DRE to visit most classes most Sundays, just to say Hello and check in. Also, RE Angels are expected to visit/interrupt you once or twice each morning (especially classes held on the second floor of the Meetinghouse and in the Clarke St. building). The RE Angel should introduce him/herself and ask if you need anything. On Sundays when the DRE is not here, we arrange to have members of the RE Committee cover for them to provide support.

R.E. ANGELS

RE Angels help out at both services; usually one per service. They function mainly in a twofold way on Sunday mornings. First, they serve to welcome and orient visitors and newcomers. They review forms and literature at our RE Welcome Table in the Community Room and help new families find their children's classrooms. Secondly, they provide back-up to the classes and teachers. They might help find supplies, help serve snack, assist a young child with using the restroom, or briefly sit with a child who is having behavior challenges. They will visit all classes at least once (preferably twice) just to make sure things are going smoothly, and to offer to assist if needed. One person serves as the RE Angel Coordinator, ensuring that Angels are signed up for both services each Sunday. For reminders about their

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responsibilities, RE Angels can refer to an “RE Angel Duties” sheet, copies of which are handed out in September and kept in the RE Office.

ARRIVAL AND PREPARATION

Teachers should arrive 15-30 minutes before the worship service begins, in order to set out supplies, and make sure the room is ready for children’s arrival. For Preschool – Third Grade classes, please find a copy of the “Highlights Window” document in your Classroom Binder. Fill it out and hang in the plastic sleeve outside your classroom door so that parents know what you did today. Be sure to have time to come upstairs to join in worship with everyone, so that you can escort your class to their room when we sing the children out of the sanctuary.

CLASS TIME PATTERNS & RITUALS

There are many good reasons to follow a familiar routine each Sunday morning. First, with teachers rotating and sharing the lead role from week to week, classroom rituals provide comforting familiarity for children. They also teach values that are important to us. Further, they incorporate elements into the children’s experience, which the children will not otherwise get on a regular basis. Teachers are strongly encouraged to include these elements in your time with the children:

- Take attendance. Please take attendance using the roster in your classroom binder. The RE Office keeps data on classroom attendance, but this also gives you a chance to say “Good Morning” to each child individually, and to help reinforce everyone’s learning and remembering each other’s names. Please write guests or visitors in by hand. The RE office will track their registration status and put fresh class rosters in your binder periodically. If you have a child guest, you should receive a “Child/Youth Guest” form from the guest’s host child or parent. If you have a newcomer or visitor, and are able to meet his/her parent, direct them toward the R.E. Welcome Table to complete a Visitor brochure. Ask them if there is anything special you should know about their child.
- Have children wear nametags. Please, when possible, encourage them to make and use a reusable nametag, rather than using a sticker nametag each week, which is wasteful of resources. Note: we try to keep extra blank address label sheets on the Welcome Table for children who wish to doodle or practice writing their name.
- Light a chalice. This is a central ritual in Unitarian Universalism. Chalices and flameless candles are in all classrooms. You are encouraged to say some words as you light the chalice. A very common suggestion reads: *We light this chalice to celebrate Unitarian Universalism. Ours is a faith of the open mind. Ours is a faith of the helping hand. Ours is a faith of the loving heart. Together, we work for peace and justice in our community.* Some classes like to sing “This Little Light of Mine.” Other chalice lighting words can be found in the UU hymnal or online.
- Share Joys and Sorrows. Many classes have a basket of stones or shells, which children choose, then drop back in the basket when they share their joys and sorrows.
- Collect Magic Pennies: (up through fifth grade only) This is a monetary collection taken, and then pooled. The children vote annually to choose nonprofit organizations to receive their collective Magic Pennies. It’s a good idea to remind them of the way in which they are contributing to something larger than themselves, through giving Magic Pennies. Classrooms have Magic Penny cans, which are decorated with a colorful collage of images. Younger children, especially, enjoy singing the Magic Penny song, which goes like this: *Love is something if you give it away, give it away, give it away! Love is something if you give it away, you end up having more! It’s just like a magic penny: hold it tight and you won’t have any. Lend it, spend it and you’ll have so many – they’ll roll all over the floor! For Love is something if you give it away, give it away, give it away! Love is something if you give it away, you end up having more!* Remember, at the end of class, to bring the money you collected to the RE Office. There’s a Magic Penny can next to the printer where you can dump your collection.
- Have snack: Parents are asked to take turns providing snack for the class to share. Use snack time as a learning opportunity. The food you share could tie in with the day’s lesson if teachers are able to coordinate it. It’s a good idea to keep a small stash of non-perishable snack items in your room; there are Tupperware snack bins available for this purpose. Please use the lids and close them tightly; we have had mice infestations in the past and don’t want to encourage them to come back! Pitchers for drinks are kept in the kitchen in a cupboard behind the door. Water is simple to serve and healthy to drink, but you may want to have juice. Unfinished juice

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containers may go in the refrigerator, labeled with your class and the date, and remember to use it up next week! Please do not leave orange juice or milk in the fridge; they go by too quickly. For cups, we have purple plastic tumblers. These should be carried to the downstairs kitchen in the small trays provided and stacked in racks to be washed. The RE Angel will run the high temp dishwasher at the end of the morning.

- Ending class: if at all possible, tell the children who will be teaching next week and what the lesson will be about before you say Goodbye. Children up through second grade should stay in the classroom until a parent/guardian or older sibling comes to get them. Older children may leave when class is over to go find their parents.

CLASSROOM BINDERS

These are three-ring binders which are dropped off in classrooms prior to the start of the morning's activities. They stay here in the building; please do not take them home with you! First Service binders are black; Second Service binders are white. They contain important reference forms including:

- Special info about children in your class, including allergies, health issues, or other special circumstances. Please read and heed this!! (It is on brightly colored paper in the inside front cover)
- Attendance roster
- Teacher-RE Office Communication Forms
- Highlights Window sheets for younger classes (these are to be posted outside the classrooms so parents can read what you did in class that day)
- Fire Drill Plans
- Lockdown Considerations
- RE Handbook

WHEN AND HOW TO USE THE CLASSROOM BINDER

- As you prepare for class: Take a look in and on your binder. There may be updates, teacher/RE office news or special events that we intend for you to read on Sunday.
- At the beginning of class: Please take attendance. If someone is new and his/her parent is there, make sure they've completed a visitor form. If not, ask the RE Angel to assist them with this. Forms are on the Welcome Table.
- At the end of class: Fill out a Teacher/RE Office Communication form and leave it in the binder for the RE Office and for reference of future teachers.

DISMISSAL OF CHILDREN

Classes are over at quarter past the hour (10:15 and 12:15). Children third grade and up may be dismissed to their parents. Preschool – second grade teachers: Please keep children in your classroom until parent/guardian or older sibling picks them up.

CLEAN UP, WRAP UP

Leftover snacks should go in your snack bin with the lid shut tight to keep the mice away. Opened juice (not OJ or milk) can go in the fridge, labeled for your class. Unopened beverages should stay in your classroom. Wipe off your tables. Cleaning supplies, including small bottles of cleaning spray, paper towels, and a dustpan and broom, are available in each classroom for your convenience. Classrooms also have a small compost container for cups, napkins, and non-liquid, non-meat food scraps. Composting guidelines are on the lids of these containers. Please clean up things like glue, glitter, paint, etc. thoroughly. Chairs should be stacked so that floors may be cleaned. Please don't stack chairs more than seven high; too much weight can crack the plastic feet of the chair on the bottom. Tables can be left as is. Put supply closet items back when you are done so they are there for others. If something is in low supply, or missing, let the RE office know. Bring your classroom binder back to the RE office on your way out!

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Religious Education Program Content

CURRICULA: THE CONTENT WE TEACH

Descriptions of the curricular themes we follow are in the RE Prospectus, or Program Guide. With the youngest children, our priority is to help them feel safe and happy to be here. They are important and this is a place where they belong. As children get older, we begin to share more about UU values, and what a faith community is. Further, we support them to explore what it means to live according to their faith, and how Unitarian Universalism informs that. For groups that span two grades, we “loop” a pair of age-appropriate curricula on a two year cycle, so children avoid repeating content. We use the same curricula at both service times, for the age groups that meet both times: Preschool- Fifth grade. Classes for Sixth-Twelfth grade are only offered during the 11:00 service.

CURRICULA: BORROWING

For all our printed curricula, we have multiple copies. For the most part, these are kept in the former RE Office, located through the library on the basement level. Volumes should be checked out at RE Orientation, or directly with the DRE. Please put your name and phone number on the book card and leave it in the designated location or with the DRE. Remember to return what you borrowed when the session is over! We have several copies of each *Tapestry of Faith* curriculum printed in binders, but these are accessible and free online as well.

LIBRARY

We have an outstanding library collection, which is housed in an area on the basement level. Most notable is our children’s collection, which features many books that speak to UU values, anti-racism themes, multiculturalism, Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender families, and more. We also have collections for youth, young adults, and adults. There are books about Unitarian Universalism, religion, parenting, and more. Books from our library are selected to accompany many of our R.E. curricula, and are gathered in baskets, kept in the classrooms. You are free to check out a book any time, though you are most encouraged to do so on Sunday mornings, when our librarian, Rebecca Anderson, is present to assist you. The Library is closed in the summer. We have a Library Committee, whose members develop library programs and maintain our collection. We are in the process of entering our collection into a database, which we hope will soon be accessible online. For more information about our UU Library, please refer to our library brochure, copies of which are on the library desk and the RE Welcome Table.

SPECIAL CLASS SCHEDULES

A few class schedules don’t exactly follow the RE calendar. Neighboring Faiths, open to 7th & 8th graders (though usually comprised of 7th) takes a number of field trips throughout the year to various houses of worship in the Burlington area. These trips generally take the place of the Sunday morning class, and occur whenever those faiths gather. This may be at a different time on a Sunday, or it may be a Friday evening or Saturday. Participants’ families are informed about the schedule and field trip plans.

Our Whole Lives (OWL), generally comprised of 8th graders, has a special schedule which allows for some Sundays off and some Sundays with extra long “double” sessions. The class starts at 10:45 and goes till 12:15; double sessions go until 1:30. OWL families receive their schedule for the year in September.

Our Youth Group (9th – 12th grade) meets most Sunday mornings when RE is happening. They gather from 10:45-12:15. One regular exception is their monthly evening meeting: the second Sunday of the month from 6-9 PM. This evening gathering replaces the Sunday morning meeting, allowing the option to attend worship instead. They also have several overnights throughout the UU year.

Welcoming new people into our spiritual community

WELCOME TABLE

Each Sunday, an R.E. Angel sets up an “R.E. Welcome Table” downstairs in the Community Room, just ahead of you as you climb the ramp. This table is intended mostly for visitors and newcomers, but others may find items of interest there, too. Check out the brochures and literature kept there!

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USHERS, GREETERS, AND THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Each Sunday morning, you will find people at the entrances to the Sanctuary, handing out Orders of Worship and greeting people. You'll find tables with nametags and visitor information. Families who are visiting, or who are bringing guests should introduce themselves as such, so that ushers and greeters may assist and orient them to our Sunday morning activities.

Communication

Communication in the 21st Century is ever evolving! Currently, we are making a concerted shift toward emphasizing electronic communication and minimizing our use of paper. Newcomers receive our weekly enews blasts and our monthly newsletter. Please check out our website (www.uusociety.org) or request to join our open Face Book group to get "in the loop" of news and communication!

Policies, Procedures and Safety

Good, fun learning depends on children being safe in our programs. Regularly, we review and update our practices to keep pace with program changes. It is important that members of the RE Community familiarize themselves with our safety practices, to better ensure safety for all involved in our programming. Our policies and procedures follow alphabetically:

ACCIDENTS

Anyone, child or adult, who has an accident here must complete and submit an accident report form. These are kept in the main office. There is a special accident form for staff as well, and also a form expressly for motor vehicle accidents.

ALLERGIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS

On the Registration form, we ask for information about allergies or any other special needs or information pertaining to children. We then share with teachers any such information provided, via a brightly-colored sheet kept in the front pocket of each classroom binder. It is updated whenever new children register for the class. It is the teachers' responsibility to refer to this sheet before leading a class.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

All paid staff over eighteen years of age must have a clear background check before they begin work here.

CHILD MISSING

If you suspect a child has gone missing, notify the front office immediately. We will work swiftly to locate the child. Follow your instinct: it is better to be safe than sorry!

CHAPERONES

Chaperones for field trips and overnights are expected to actively supervise the participants for whom they are responsible. This means being aware of where participants are at all times, and not allowing participants to separate themselves from the group for long periods of time, or without notifying adults where they are going.

CLASS CANCELLATION POLICY

The RE Program at First UU states a safety policy of two adults in the classroom. Therefore, classes will be cancelled when two adults (lead and helper/assistant) are not available on a given Sunday. A class must not be held with only one teacher present. Children whose classes are cancelled may join their parents in the sanctuary for worship, or a sibling's class.

If two adults are not available for a class by the previous Wednesday morning, the DRE should be contacted so as to announce this in the weekly enews. If there is no Lead, classes will be announced as cancelled. If there is a lead, but no

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helper or assistant, a notice that a helper is needed will be put in the weekly enews, and volunteers will be directed to contact that team's coordinator.

If, between Thursday afternoon and Saturday night, *the scheduled helper/assistant for the upcoming Sunday has to cancel but the Lead is still prepared to teach*, dial the Society's main number: 862-5630 and press "6" at the initial recording, to access a voicemail box dedicated for this purpose. Please leave a voicemail including your name, the stewardship role which you cannot fill, which class is affected, and which service time. We will check this voicemail box by 8:30 Sunday morning, so as to announce needs during worship.

CODE OF ETHICS

All who will, or may, interact with our children and youth here at First UU, are required to sign our Code of Ethics every year, whether they are an RE volunteer steward (parent or otherwise) or a member of the Society's paid staff. It reads:

Code of Ethics

To be signed by all paid staff and all volunteers involved with children and/or youth.

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering the spiritual development from both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions 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 of their relationship 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 harass or engage in behavior with children of youth which constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.

DISMISSAL FROM CLASSES

Children in Preschool – grade two should be picked up by parents/guardians at their classrooms. Children in grade Three and up may leave class when it is over to find their parents in coffee hour. Please be prompt about picking up young children so that teachers can focus on cleaning up and going home!

DRIVING CHILDREN

Volunteer drivers are essential for many R.E. activities. For the safety of the driver, other adult chaperones, and the children/youth you are driving, please follow this safe driver checklist:

- For drivers transporting children other than their own, we require copies of the driver's license and automobile insurance card. New copies must be made each new church year, for those who will be transporting children other than their own. Understand that we may ask for current copies of these documents from drivers prior to any trip. Please submit these to the RE Office prior to the trip. The Society's copier may be used to make these copies.
- Carry copies of permission forms (for the trip you are taking) for the minors in your car with you.
- Please make sure your car has a current inspection, and that the brakes are working, tires inflated properly, horn, signals, and lights are all in working order. Essentially, ensure that all maintenance you do for your own safety is up to date.
- You are advised to carry the following items in your car:
 - A cell phone (if you have one)
 - A first aid kit (the RE office has some you may borrow)
 - A blanket (especially in winter)
 - A flashlight
- If this is a UU District event (First UU is part of the Northern New England District of the Unitarian Universalist Association), please comply with district rules regarding youth participation, permission, driving, etc.

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- Two adults per car is strongly encouraged by the RE Office. This aligns with our Two Adult policy regarding classrooms. This is for the safety of both adults and minors.

FIELD TRIPS

For field trips, we require signed permission slips. In the case of a class such as Neighboring Faiths, which will take multiple trips over the course of the year, a blanket permission slip is used at the start of the church year. If your class will be going on a field trip, please provide all details of the trip to the RE Office, so that we can be of assistance in case anyone has questions. Let us know specifically where and when the group will meet and return, and any other details pertinent to the trip.

FIRE DRILLS

We practice a fire drill once or twice annually at both services. Fire drill procedures are spelled out on a sheet kept in classroom binders. In addition, a fire exit map is provided next to the door of each classroom. The DRE reminds the RE Community of upcoming fire drills via email, but it is teachers' responsibility to be familiar with fire drill protocols so that we can evacuate the building quickly, quietly and safely.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

These are located throughout the meetinghouse. Please take it upon yourself to note the location of fire extinguishers kept close to your classroom.

LOCKDOWNS

We do not currently practice lockdowns, but there is a handout, "Lockdown Considerations" which is kept in classroom binders. Please review it, as this is a safety drill we may start to incorporate.

MANDATED REPORTING

The Society staff and minister include mandated reporters, in the case of any suspected child abuse. Teachers are expected to share any reasonable suspicions or concerns regarding students with the DRE.

OVERNIGHTS

For overnights, we require signed permission slips. An Overnights Binder, which includes a planning checklist and copies of pertinent forms, is available in the RE Office. Please borrow it if you will be planning an overnight.

REGISTRATION

All regularly attending children must be registered in our programs; their parents/guardians must complete a registration form. We ask that those who have been here three times register their children. Guests must complete a Guest Form, and Visitors: a Visitor Brochure. These forms give us basic information about the children and their families, which helps us to support their safety.

SICK CHILD POLICY

Children may not be in our care if they have a temperature at or above 100 degrees, have been vomiting or have had diarrhea in the past 24 hours, have an infectious or unidentified rash, have any illness that interferes with participation, or if any of these symptoms develop while in our care.

STRANGERS PRESENT

If an unfamiliar adult is in the RE space, it is the RE Angel's responsibility to approach them and ask, "May I help you?" This responsibility, whenever possible, should extend to parents and others. Vigilance and awareness regarding the adults in our midst supports children's safety.

TWO ADULT POLICY

We maintain two teachers with each class on Sundays. Not only does this provide teaching support, but it also keeps teachers and children safe. Teachers, please take this policy seriously, as it is a key practice for keeping children safe with volunteer teachers. If you find yourself alone unexpectedly on a Sunday morning, let the DRE, RE Angel, or

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Administrative Assistant know as soon as possible.

WINDOWS INTO CLASSROOMS

Nearly all classrooms have a window in the door, or into another actively used space. Please keep windows as clear as possible for safety reasons. Most, if not all of these windows have shades. Please keep them up at all times; they are there for use only in a lockdown situation.

When and Where it all happens!

R.E. CALENDAR

Each year, based on the Sunday worship schedule, the RE Calendar comes together. One version of it is a template for teaching schedules. Some classes modify this calendar to meet special curricular or class needs. Our Whole Lives (OWL), Neighboring Faiths, and the Yuuth Group are good examples of this. These groups distribute their schedules as needed.

CLASSROOM LOCATIONS

Maps are available in September, showing where classes are located each year. This changes somewhat from year to year, as groups are assigned to rooms largely to best match group size with room size. Placements are also arranged so that, when possible, children from different services who are following the same curricula, will be in the same room. This way, resources can be easily shared.

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