

Westside Unitarian Universalist Congregation



Religious Exploration for Children and Youth

Summer 2017

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WELCOME TO WESTSIDE!!

The purpose of the Religious Exploration process for Children and Youth at Westside Unitarian Universalist Congregation is to grow happy, healthy, safe, and spirited lifelong Unitarian Universalists. Our teachers, parents, students, staff, and congregants covenant to do this by nurturing and affirming a sense of Unitarian Universalist identity, self-esteem, acceptance, and never-ending growth.

Westside's Mission:

**Feeding your spirit,
Expanding your mind,
Working for Justice**

We are committed to being a caring community that celebrates and respects the diversity of individuals. We strive to nourish our spiritual, intellectual, and ethical growth, take personal and collective action to promote social justice, and inspire and encourage each other to live the values we share as Unitarian Universalists.

Our program seeks to support this mission through:

1. Exploration of Unitarian Universalist theology and spirituality that affirms the interconnectedness of all life, the spirit of love, and the delight of awe and mystery.
2. Learning about Unitarian Universalism through its stories and heroes.
3. Opportunities to live our covenant and be active creators of our living tradition through justice work and peace-making in the congregation and the community at large.

Summer Religious Exploration (RE) Program

During the summer months between mid-June and mid-September when many families are away and vacationing, we offer one multi-age class each Sunday morning, and open our Nursery to infants through preschool age. The multi-age class is designed to engage children in kindergarten through 6th grades (ages 5-12). Children begin in the service each week, and they go to our Social Hall when we sing them out, where they will meet on the stage.



Nursery:

Our Nursery is open every Sunday through the summer, for infants through preschoolers (age 4). This is a broader age-range than through the regular RE program year. Our Nursery class opens at 10:15 AM or you can bring your children here after the “Story For All Ages” is told in the service (usually around 10:45 am).

Multi-Age Class:

The Summer Exploration program is meant to be a fun experience for kids ages 5-12 to be in community doing a variety of activities that include stories, energizers, movement, games, music, art, and outside adventures. We invite one well-known adult in our community to be a “guest speaker” each Sunday, to share a passion that shows how they live their UU values. Topics can include learning about orienteering, origami, role playing social justice issues, yoga, and are connected to our seven UU principles. The guest speaker is joined by a veteran RE teacher from WSUU’s school-year RE program who opens the class with a chalice lighting ritual, leads group introductions and check-in, takes attendance, and engages everyone in an energizer. The RE teacher helps keep kids engaged and will manage the group as needed. After the guest speaker program, the RE teacher closes the class with a wrap-up ritual.

Our Principles and Sources

Unitarian Universalism is a Covenantal Faith, not a Creedal one. This means that instead of being asked to believe certain things to be a part of our community, we are asked to make promises to each other about the way we will act. These promises together form our Covenant. The Covenant that binds all Unitarian Universalists together is the Covenant of Our Seven Principles:

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

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The living tradition that we share draws from many sources:

1. 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;
2. 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;
3. Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
4. Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
5. 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;
6. 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 that 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.

WHAT HAPPENS ON SUNDAY MORNING?

We are happy to welcome you to Westside on Sunday morning! Our Sunday Services begin at 10:30 AM and last generally until 11:45 AM. Parents are asked to pick up their children from classes at 11:50 AM.

Upon entering, if you have any questions, please feel free to ask one of our helpful Greeters. If these informative people cannot answer your question, they can direct you to the appropriate person.

If you do not have a permanent nametag, please feel free to make nametags for your whole family.

At 10:30 AM, you will hear our singing bowl. The ringing of the bowl signifies the time for quiet throughout our Sanctuary, to center ourselves, and to enter into worship. When the sound of the bowl can no longer be heard, we join in a welcoming, and then appreciate the Prelude together. Children of all ages are invited to worship with us for the first 20 minutes of the service. This portion traditionally includes the Welcoming, the Prelude, the Chalice Lighting, the unison Affirmation, and some hymns.

When the Time for All Ages is announced, we welcome anyone of any age to move to the front of the Sanctuary. This part of the service usually includes a short story or a conversation with the children.

After the story, all of the children in the Sanctuary (those who participated and those who did not) are 'sung out' to their classes. The congregation will form an arch over the center aisle with their arms and sing a song. The children will exit through the main Sanctuary door and proceed downstairs to the Social Hall. Children and adults exiting may use either staircase as they both lead to the same location. The children will be accompanied by teachers and the Director of Religious Exploration and/or the RE Program Assistant to class. Please feel free to walk through the arch with your child and accompany him or her downstairs for the class.

When the service is over, parents are encouraged to greet their children in their rooms no later than 10 minutes after the service has been let out, but not before 11:50AM. Children and adults alike are then invited to join us for Social Hour in the Social Hall.

Of course, children are invited to participate in the service in its entirety at any time. At Westside, we welcome and encourage children to worship with their parents, regardless of age, at any time.

If you have a very young child or a newborn, please feel free to use the Quiet Room on the upper level of the Sanctuary if you need special time with your baby. You will be able to see and hear the service from this perspective.

Westside and its Religious Exploration Program welcome your family and its specific needs. If we can make you more comfortable or be in any way more helpful, please feel free to contact us. We are happy to ensure that your family feels at home here!

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