

Religious Education for School-age Children (ages 6 – 12) **and their Families**

Minds that Think

Hearts that Love

Hands that are Open to Serve

Following the Unitarian Universalist faith tradition, religious education for school-age children at the North Parish seeks to engage them in figuring out how they fit into their families, their peer groups, and their faith community and to provide sacred stories and religious practices which help them to understand and embrace the world around them. Building on their own need for competence and for a sense that they are making a contribution, we help them create and organize projects to make the world a better place, and offer them support for living their lives according to their religious values.

The wisdom we share with children is drawn from sacred stories, human experience, and the natural world. From the beginning, we encourage their questions about earth and sky, life and death, God, and all matters of the spirit, affirming our belief that revelation is not complete and that there is always more to learn and discover.

We support and affirm all families, and offer to parents and children together the opportunity to share a spiritual journey with open minds, loving hearts, and helping hands.

Our goals for the children's religious education are to:

- Help children and families embrace life fully, with its wonder and mystery as well as its challenges and sorrows.
- Create a caring intergenerational community where each child is known and cherished.
- Provide children experiences with spiritual wisdom from the sources of our Unitarian Universalist tradition.
- Empower children to carry their faith into the world through the way they live their daily lives

CHILDREN'S SPIRITUALITY

School-age children are story-collectors and problem solvers! The years between ages seven and twelve are years when children are very interested in learning not only about the stories, practices, and rituals of their faith, but also in engaging questions of fairness, moral order (i.e. what are the rules?) and racial, ethnic, gender, and religious identity and roles. Children of this age need to feel competent, and need a way to contribute to making the world a better place. They also need challenges of increasing complexity as they move toward the beginning of adolescence.

SUNDAY Morning, 9 and 11 am

To accommodate the developmental characteristics of the school-age child, North Parish offers worship and small group ministry for religious education.

- A chapel service includes wisdom stories as part of worship designed for school-age children. This year's focus is wisdom from the Unitarian Universalist tradition and sources.
- Small group meetings for children in grades one through five are led by volunteers who help

connect the wisdom from the story to children's lives. These groups meet weekly at both services, while the group for older children (grades six through eight) meets twice a month at 11 am only.

- Activities and reflection engage the whole child, using music, drama, art, games, conversation, and outdoor exploration as ways of connecting spiritual wisdom to their lives.
- Small groups create and organize projects that carry faith into the world. Past projects include sponsoring children in Ethiopia, supporting MSPCA, raising worms for compost, and collecting food for the People's Pantry.

Family Programming

We offer to children and families support for their spiritual growth in several ways:

- Periodic "family gatherings" for families with similarly-aged children in order to strengthen relationships.
- Intergenerational rituals that celebrate the wonders and challenges of being human.
- Weekly family e-news
- Pastoral support in times of need.