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Credentialed Religious Educator

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Administration and Volunteer Management

Summary

In the first Renaissance Module I participated in, shortly after becoming a Religious Educator, the esteemed Pat Kahn and Kathy Strawser taught us that the root of “administer” comes from the same as “minister,” to serve. Since then, I have come to learn that the role of administering the Religious Education (RE) program successfully was vital to the health and richness of the program. It really is ministry! Administration is the foundation required for an RE Program to build strength - without it, the program would fail. From managing databases of volunteers and children to understanding the role of religious professionals in a congregation, I elevated the program I serve by applying my training and experiences.

To administer a religious education program is to provide volunteers with the tools they need to bring curriculum and materials to children, youth, and their families. I see my role as program director to curate a volunteer team, develop and implement a meaningful curriculum for our children, and advocate for the continued learning of all in the congregation. While I do not serve in a Lifespan role, it is necessary to have a strong connection to the children and their families as well as the rest of the congregation. The congregation, as a whole, should be invested in the religious education programming and the religious education professional should likewise be invested in the larger congregation. By providing faith formation opportunities that bring children, youth, adults, and elders together, we can create lifelong bonds that transcend congregational walls. It not only “takes a village” to raise a child, but to run a RE Program! By matching volunteers with programs that not only match their skill sets but their also passions, we can grow their commitment to Unitarian Universalism just as much as the children that are in their classrooms. Not everyone is a perfect fit for working with children and youth, but all individuals in the congregation can play a role in helping to shape our religious education programming. I can curate a program that has congregational buy-in at all levels by filling roles both inside and outside of our classrooms.

Volunteer recruitment efforts begin in conversation and by being in community with the congregation at large. We recruit eager volunteers by showcasing the appeal of volunteering in RE as a way to learn *with* our children and youth, by engaging in play and fun in our classrooms, and by highlighting how teaching RE is impacting the future of Unitarian Universalism.

It has been said that “budgets are moral documents”. What we, as a congregation and program, fund is what we are giving breath to and want to survive. In my time as a religious educator at the Unitarian Universalist Church of South Hills (UUCSH), affectionately known as “Sunnyhill,” I have advocated for increased funding for the youth group, religious education programming and supplies, DRE professional development, and increased wages for nursery caregivers. In 2012, I entered this position, overseeing not only religious education programming but also the care of 60 young people. At that time there were no formal policies or

procedures in place to keep children or youth safe, from diaper changes to incident reports. By January 2020 we raised our childcare provider's wage from \$7/hour to \$15/hour (based on research of UUA Fair Compensation Guidelines and local childcare wages), our enrollment was over 120 students, and we had clear policies and practices in place for both our nursery and larger religious education program. Each of these components has a direct relationship to the care given to minister to toddlers, children, and youth and to the individuals that work with them. I have advocated for the role of religious educator to be elevated to a professional by working with the RE committee, minister, and Board of Trustees to encourage a formal employment contract and evaluations as well as to be compensated at the recommended UUA Fair compensation standard, including health care coverage.

In my previous position in restaurant management, I worked with budgets that were given or created from a complex system of sales and staff hours. The knowledge of how to create and manage a program budget was not part of my skill set before taking this position. I learned how to work with Excel, Google Sheets, and other programs to help keep my numbers on track and to be transparent about spending. I continue to manage the RE Curriculum and Supplies, Childcare, OWL, Youth Group, Coming of Age, and DRE Professional Expense accounts. I am also responsible for staffing our nursery and calculating pay for childcare providers. In 2013 we began a tradition of a Coming of Age trip, which added additional budgeting and accounting needs.

I believe that my dedication to professionalism will benefit this program as well as the individual in this role for years to come.

Formation

Structured Learning

- Administration of Religious Education Renaissance Module
 - Near Youngstown Ohio, February 2013, 15 hours
- Multicultural Religious Education Renaissance Module
 - The Mountain, North Carolina, July 2018, 15 hours
- Start As You Mean to Continue, A Workshop for New DREs
 - Ocean Grove New Jersey, August 2012, 12 hours
- Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Mandated and Permissive Reporting in Pennsylvania
 - Online, University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work, January 2015, 3 hours
- Lifelong Learning and Beyond, Workshop
 - Louisville KY, General Assembly, 2013
- WordPress Training
 - Community College of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, October 2013, 6 hours

RE Based Professional Work/ Leadership Experience

- Led the RE Committee through a year-long envisioning process (2015)

- Record keeping and budget of RE expenses (2012-present)
- Led Coming of Age Trips to Boston and Washington DC (2013-2018)
- Hired paid childcare providers and recruited volunteers (2012-present)
- Organized bus trips for congregants to attend The Women's March (2017) and March for our Lives (2018) in Washington DC

Life Experiences

- Religious Education Intern
 - January 2009-April 2009
 - The Unitarian Church of Charleston
- Administrative Assistant
 - April 2009-May 2009 (Moved)
 - The Unitarian Church of Charleston
- Restaurant Management
 - Full-time manager of a casual dining establishment, June 2009-July 2012

Application and Integration

RE Teacher Training 2019



What to Expect

Sunnyhill RE Volunteer Training 2019 Schedule

9:30-10:15	Chalice Lighting, Covenanting, Sharing Stories
10:15-10:45	Resources
10:45-11:15	Scavenger Hunt and Safety
11:15-11:30	Break
11:30-12:15	Lesson Planning
12:15-1:00	Lunch- Chipotle
1:00-1:30	Classroom Management
1:30-2:00	Multiculturalism and Special Needs Inclusion
2:00-3:00	CPR Training- Provided by MRTSA

Teacher Covenant 2019

- We will communicate
 - Teachers will communicate, on an ongoing basis, with each other and the DRE about how they feel the class is going. Challenges will be discussed openly and problem-solving will be a community activity. If there is an issue or misunderstanding, we will speak openly and directly.
 - DRE will communicate with teams on an ongoing basis to solicit feedback and help plan for the future.
 - As a community of religious educators we will all keep each other informed about the health and well-being of the children and youth we teach.
 - Teachers DRE will communicate with parents of children and youth when there are things to celebrate about their children and when there is cause for concern.
- We will come prepared and ready to lead
 - When we are working in the Religious Education program we will be fully PRESENT. We will practice self-care so that we are able to be our best selves when we are together.
 - Teachers will come prepared to teach. We will read or plan the lesson in advance, know the materials we will be using and communicate as needed to our co-teachers and DRE.
 - Teachers will plan so that supplies needed for a class on Sunday are requested by Wednesday at noon (via email to Jen at dre@sunnyhill.org) to ensure delivery. (Hard to find items may require more time.)
 - DRE will email Soul Matters Packet for the upcoming month no later than two weeks prior to the first Sunday of that month via email.
 - Teachers: If we cannot teach as planned, we will communicate directly with our team and switch schedules or arrange a substitute. Emergency absences will be communicated to the DRE, Jen McGlothlin, by email at dre@sunnyhill.org or by text/phone at (412-951-1896).
- We will share and respect one another and our students
 - Teachers covenant with our teams to share the responsibilities of teaching.
 - Teachers, Volunteers, and DRE will respect children and youth as individuals in their own right.
- Anything else we need to agree to?

Safety Components

- Physical Safety while in the Building
 - Fire or other natural disasters
 - CPR, AED, First Aid
 - Unwelcome visitors
- Standards for volunteers working with children and/or youth
 - Clearances
 - Mandated Reporter
 - Sunnyhill Safe Congregation Policy
 - Child Incident Report
- RE Policies
 - Students in grades 4 and below should remain in the main room downstairs

What is Multicultural Education?

1. Primarily, a way of thinking. It is about establishing a culture that makes space for multiple perspectives. It is a way of asking questions, that we might bring groups that have been on the margins into the center of society and encourage those in the dominant culture to make a commitment to resist and challenge systems of marginalization and oppression.
2. It presents and honors the experiences and perspectives of many people. It welcomes everyone's stories.
3. It is not just about race and ethnicity, it embraces all attributes of identity and culture, including gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, socioeconomic status, age or stage of life, family structure, and national origin or native language.
4. It is not something we only do at certain times of year. It is a philosophy of education that should encompass all of RE and all of Sunnyhill, all the time.

What is Multicultural Education?

Multicultural Education supports us to try and see from different people's perspectives. It gives us ways to ask questions and listen for answers, so we can work together to bring various groups that have been on the margins into the center of society. It supports us to care and take action to make our society more just and humane.

There are four essential steps to implementing multiculturalism in our faith communities:

- Knowing the stories, both personal and institutional - who we are, what our histories are, and why.
- Listening to the silences- being aware of who is left out, ignored, or avoided in our lives and in the lives of our religious communities.
- Engaging in critical reflection on the insights of the stories uncovered and the silences heard: What does this mean for our life together, as we take diversity seriously?
- Moving toward intentional transformation, celebrating the new richness and grieving the losses that change brings.

Questions for Discussion

In what ways are we as a congregation diverse? How is that diversity recognized, affirmed, and celebrated?

What are the silences in our community? Who is not here, not heard, not included? Who is ignored?

What would this religious community look like if we were to hear and see and know each of us as full participants?

Reflection

For many years, I called a meeting of RE teachers before the start of a new church year to discuss the curriculum selection and other basics of RE. In 2019 I held my first half-day teacher training workshop for RE teachers and it was a success. It featured guest speakers (who are experts in their respective fields- special needs inclusion and education) who gave short workshops on lesson planning and working with kids of varying needs, a scavenger hunt around the building to find where important items are located, and CPR training all in one half-day. In the images above, you will find several slides from the training, including the goals for the day, the agenda, the covenant for RE Volunteers, safety considerations, and information about multicultural education. The main inspiration from this session came from a group activity from the Multicultural Religious Education Renaissance Module (Summer 2019). That course encouraged breaking down barriers and getting personal to open up the door for deeper conversation in addition to learning about Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, Multicultural (ARAOMC) Religious Education, which is reflected in the workshop's beginning (sharing stories and covenanting) and end components (multiculturalism and special needs.)*

*More details can be found in the Human and Faith Development Section, on page 33

Parents and Volunteer “Portals” on the Sunnyhill Website

I wanted to create a place for parents/guardians and volunteers to find information about religious education that was simple and direct. To do this, I created a location on our website dedicated to links, forms, resources, and more. All aspects and information needed to teach, register for, or learn about religious education at Sunnyhill can be found in one location on the website. Examples of digitized resources include the catalog of the RE Library, a list of items in the RE supply closet, instructions for submitting required Pennsylvania clearances, forms for volunteering/registering in RE, and so much more.

In Pennsylvania, volunteers must submit clearances for any position working directly or indirectly with children and youth and are mandated reporters. These are tasks that I cannot complete for the volunteer and failure of our program to comply could result in legal action. I have created tools to clarify the process so that the teachers can focus on being present and enjoying their time in the classroom. We incorporated flexible scheduling (2-3 teachers per eleven-week session, three eleven-week sessions per church year), distributed condensed Soul Matters materials, and created an atmosphere of appreciation so that teachers feel valued.

In addition to the resources for teachers and parents found on our website there is also information for individuals interested in a teaching position. The below screen captures the first step in information collection from volunteers seeking a position in the RE program. Once this form is filled out I will reach out with additional forms (if new to our program) or with an offer for a teaching position (if they have taught in our program before and I have a position in mind). For those interested in OWL, RE committee, or a childcare position, there are different processes in place, including training when needed. There have been times when a volunteer or staff person was not a good fit for a role, due to scheduling or even personality. In my experience, a conversation with an individual is the initial step in understanding the issues and can lead to pastoral care or a change in positions. These situations are handled on a case-by-case basis. There have been times when the issues were resolved through mentoring or coaching from another experienced teacher, transportation offered to help get a nursery caregiver to work, or a change from an in-class position to an administrative helper outside of the classroom. There is always room for more volunteers in an RE Program!

[About](#) [Get Involved](#) [Learning](#) [Justice](#) [Events](#)

[Home](#) » [Religious Education](#)

Religious Education

There are many ways to contribute to the Religious Education Program at Sunnyhill.

The quickest way to learn more about Unitarian Universalism, deepen your ties to the church, and to have fun on Sunday morning is to teach a religious education "RE" class! Teachers must be part of the Sunnyhill Community for at least 6 months and turn in Pennsylvania required clearances. Volunteer teachers take on 11 week session with their co-teacher, where they rotate responsibilities.

If setting policies, advocating for RE, and encouraging involvement is more your style-join the [RE Committee](#). The REC discusses the big picture of Unitarian Universalist Religious Education and how to implement those ideas into our Sunday morning classes and activities. They help to plan events and recruit volunteers. REC meetings are held on the Second Sunday of every month, following the service.

In addition to these specific roles, there are also other ways that volunteers are needed to round out our religious education program, such as substitute teachers, event helpers, and nursery assistants. You do not need to have a child in RE to fill any of these roles, just a passion for Religious Education!

Quick Links

[Volunteer to Teach RE during the church year \(September through May, broken up into 11 week sessions\)](#)

[Volunteer to Teach Summer RE \(Select one or more dates from June- August\)](#)

Next Sunday Service

The Myth of Polarization

Rev. Jim Magaw
February 20 | 10:00 am

Conventional thinking puts forth the idea that our current political situation has been caused by the right going further to the right and the left going further to the left. But a closer look reveals a different truth. Why is it important to push back against calls for centrism for centrism's sake?

Service will be streamed online and the church will be open for limited capacity with RSVP's.

[RSVP](#)

RE Volunteer Form

Thank you for your interest in teaching a Religious Education class at Sunnyhill!

Please use this form to let us know what class you are interested in teaching and when. You will be contacted with your teaching assignment.

dresunnyhill@gmail.com [Switch account](#)

* Required

What is your full name? *


Your answer

E-mail Address? *

Your answer

Email *

Your email



Length of time involved at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills? *

☐ Less than 6 months
☐ 6 months - 1 year
☐ 1 - 3 years
☐ 3 - 5 years
☐ 5 or more years

Have you taught a Religious Education class before?

☐ Yes
☐ No

According to new Pennsylvania State Laws, RE Volunteers are required to obtain clearances which may include the following: Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>); Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check (<https://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp>); and Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Background Check (http://www.pa.cogentid.com/index_tac.htm). Do you already have any of these clearances?

The documents must be provided and photocopied and kept on file at UUUSH before the volunteer position can begin.

☐ Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance
☐ Pennsylvania State Criminal Record Check
☐ Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Background Check

Have you lived in Pennsylvania for the last 10 years? *

☐ Yes
☐ No

[Submit](#) [Clear form](#)

Also found on the Parent Portal on the Website is a link to an RE Family Newsletter. The example below is from March 6 2020, right before Covid19 closed our doors. At that time we were exploring new options for religious education, including an “RE Choice” model that was developed by fellow Religious Educator Catherine Farmer Loya and the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church.

Sunnyhill RE Newsletter March 2020



Sunday Morning at Sunnyhill*



Religious Education PreK-8th Grade Classroom Reminders

10:10-11:10 am

Kids start in the service before heading to their classrooms.

PreK-Kindergarten: Rainbow Room, Downstairs

1st-3rd Grade: Main Room, Downstairs

4th-5th Grade: Choir Room, Main Floor

6th-8th Grade: Red Oak Room, Main Floor

Chalice Club and RE Snack directly follows the classes and takes place in the main room, downstairs. Each family shares responsibility for bringing snack, providing supervision during "Chalice Club", and helping in an RE Classroom. To sign up, click [here](#). Instructions can be found here: [Snack and Chalice Club](#)

Youth Group 11:30-12:30

*This Schedule will remain for the month of March. On April 19 we will start our 2 service pilot program (details below)

Two Service Pilot Program: April 19- May 17

From April 19 - May 17 Sunnyhill will be experimenting with a two service model. This impacts all Sunday morning activities, services, meetings, and classes.

For the 5-Week Pilot Program, the Sunday morning schedule will look as follows:

9:00 - 9:50 am First Worship Service and Religious Education

Children will start in the service with their parents. After the "Children's Story", RE Children will go to the class of their choice.

10:00 - 11:00 am Middle Hour

Adult Discussion Groups, Parent Groups, and Youth Group meet

Chalice Club and Snack for Children

11:15am - 12:05pm Second Worship Service and Religious Education

Children will start in the service with their parents. After the "Children's Story", RE Children will go to the class of their choice.

RE: Choice

The upcoming two service pilot program offers Sunnyhill a unique opportunity to engage in a new and innovative way to approach Religious Education for Children.

Introducing... RE: Choice!

RE: Choice empowers our children to make informed decisions about how they want to spend their Sunday mornings and encourages community building across generations.



Each Sunday morning, children will spend their time in one of the following areas:

Creativity in Action- Hands on Activities and Social Justice/Community Service Projects, all ages

Reflection Room- Spiritual Practices and Quiet Sensory Activities, all ages

Story and Spirit- Story and Discussion, all ages welcome but focus on younger elementary

PreK-K- Typical PreK-K RE Class

Youth Group- High School Youth Group

Worship Service- Remain in the Sanctuary

To learn more about the RE Choice Program and to ask questions, I will have an information session on Sunday, March 29, following the service.

Spring Children's Choir

Back by popular demand! Children, ages 5-12, are invited to participate in a Spring Children's Choir which will perform at the **April 19th 11:15am** service (this will be the first Sunday of the 2-service experiment). This will also be our Earth Day service, and our repertoire will reflect that.

Rehearsals will start **Sunday, March 15th** and continue every Sunday through April 12th. We will have a final rehearsal at 10:45am before the service on April 19th. Please pass along your interest and any questions to Mary Pratt (mewitzmq@gmail.com, text 412-638-6318)



Registration is OPEN for the UU College of Social Justice / Sunnyhill ACTIVATE: West Virginia Trip! [Activate: West Virginia](#) has all of the information and registration link.

March Events (all family friendly!)

Friday, March 20 Plant-Based Potluck, 7pm

Saturday, March 28 [Service Auction](#) *Nursery Care and Kids Pizza Party for Children, Youth are invited to assist with the children's activities or join the auction at a special youth rate.



wisdom

Bringing Religious Education Home

Family Fun

Build a Kite! You can make one for under \$1 out of a plastic garbage bag, two dowels, tape and string. Here are the instructions: [Video Instructions](#) For a group, we recommend making some premeasured templates so the children can use them as a guide to cut their bag to the right shape, instead of measuring it. Reflect on how the building of the kite teaches you the wisdom of careful following of instructions.

Book To Read Together

The Wisdom of your Body: [Lam Jazz](#) (for Transgender Day of Visibility Mar 31)
[Video](#)

"The story of a transgender child based on the real-life experience of Jazz Jennings, who has become a spokesperson for transkids everywhere." - Amazon

For You

[The Wisdom of Play](#)

[Spotify Playlist "Wisdom"](#)

from Soul Matters Sharing Circle

Parent Portal

Looking for RE Links? The Sunnyhill website has been updated with lots of information about RE right at your fingertips! Check it out here: [RE Parent Portal](#)
Whether it is RE Registration, RE Snack sign up, or a link to this newsletter- it can all be found on that page!

[Visit our Website](#)

STAY CONNECTED



Just two short weeks later, COVID-19 hit our area and our schools, business, and churches began to shut down. The next newsletter was sent on March 15, 2020, to guide our families on how to stay connected to the RE program as well as the entire Sunnyhill community. I was very proud of the way we pivoted to online offerings almost immediately.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION @ HOME

Sunday Morning Programming will be *online* only until further notice.

Dear Sunnyhill Parents and Guardians,

As of this Sunday, March 15 all Sunday morning programming (including RE and Youth Group) will take place online only in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Rev. Jim Magaw's letter to the congregation and corresponding details can be found [here](#).

It is a challenging and confusing time as a parent and family member. We are all concerned with the health of ourselves, our children, and our extending families as well as trying to navigate a new world of no school and no extracurricular activities. We are trying to manage "all of the things"- because that is what we are used to doing and in times of stress that doesn't change. "Do we have enough toilet paper?", "Will we have to cancel the trip?", "What will we do about childcare?"... We are entering into unfamiliar territory.

As a faith community, Sunnyhill is here. We can't begin to promise answers or solutions, but we can offer support and care to you and your family. Through the next several weeks we will be streaming Worship Services, connecting via Zoom, and offering ideas and resources for you and your family to do together. We are here, and we care.

Peace and Love,

Jennifer McGlothlin
Director of Religious Education

[RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SITE](#)

RE @ Home

New Website for Sunnyhill Religious Education materials, links, resources, activities, etc!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SITE

RE @ Home

New Website for Sunnyhill Religious Education materials, links, resources, activities, etc!

THIS SUNDAY

Sunday Morning Children and Youth Programming will take place this Sunday, March 15 at 11:30 am via ZOOM.

For this lesson, we will start with our chalice lighting, and a short story before splitting off into break out "rooms" for check in. Check-in's will be divided by age group (ie youth group will have their own separate check in).

The direct link for tomorrow is: <https://zoom.us/j/345372975>

HELP WANTED

If you would like to help with a story time, content creation, or other Religious Education components please use the [link](#) to let me know.

STAYING CONNECTED



If you are in need of any special support (spiritual, emotional, or physical), please [let us know](#).

If you are willing to run errands or perform other tasks for those who may be quarantined or at-risk, also please [let us know](#).

The Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills

1240 Washington Road
Pittsburgh PA 15228

STAY CONNECTED



Reflection

Communication is key to how we administer the RE Program in our congregations!

Budgeting and Record-Keeping

In addition to managing the typical RE budget which includes curriculum and supplies, OWL, Youth Group, Childcare, and DRE Professional Expenses, I create a budget for our annual Coming of Age trip. From 2013-2019 we sent our Coming of Age students to learn more about either Unitarian Universalist History (Boston) or Unitarian Universalism Today (Washington DC). Our trips have ranged from 3 to 11 youth based on the size of the class and always add additional responsibilities to my portfolio each year, from leading parents in their fundraising goals (and determining costs), planning an itinerary, booking airfare and lodging,

and then of course safely bringing and returning our 8th graders to and from these major cities. The examples below show how costs are projected and recorded for this trip.

2019 Boston Projected Expenses				
		Quantity	Amount/pp	Total
Tours	Harvard Tour	\$1	\$150.00	\$150.00
	Arlington Street	1	\$200.00	\$200.00
Food Day 1	Breakfast	14	\$15.00	\$210.00
	Lunch	14	\$15.00	\$210.00
	Dinner	14	\$15.00	\$210.00
	Snacks	14	\$10.00	\$140.00
Food Day 2	Lunch	14	\$15.00	\$210.00
	Dinner	14	\$15.00	\$210.00
	Snacks	14	\$10.00	\$140.00
Food Day 3	Lunch	14	\$15.00	\$210.00
	Dinner	14	\$15.00	\$210.00
	Snacks	14	\$10.00	\$140.00
Transportation	Airfare	14	\$200.00	\$2,800.00
Lodging	Walker Center	4	\$520.00	\$2,080.00
Something Fun	??	14	30	420
Misc Tips and Donations		200		
Total Tours		\$350		
Total Food		\$1,890.00		
Total Flights		\$2,800.00		
Total Lodging		\$2,080.00		
Total Tips and Donations		\$200.00		
Total Something Fun		\$420.00		
Total Projected Cost		\$7,740		

Boston Expenses	Actual vs. Expected		
	Actual	Expected	Difference
Meals	\$1,221.04	1890	-\$668.96
Lodging	\$2,520.00	2080	\$440.00
Tours	596	350	\$246.00
Travel	515.38	0	\$515.38
Flights	1909.6	2800	-\$890.40
Escape Room	420	420	\$0.00
Donations	24	200	-\$176.00
	\$7,206.02	7740	-\$533.98

Reflection

Creating a Budget for an RE program, trip, or event is a challenging mission! I have found that with experience, these tasks get easier because you aren't starting "from scratch." There are always additional items to consider- gas prices, inflation, group sizes, etc. I've found that researching what to expect for costs in advance and staying organized helps make the trip/event/class run much smoother and allows me to focus on being present instead of worrying about counting pennies.

Lenses

Technology

The incorporation of ARAOMC and Technology is vital to Administration and Volunteer Management. To reach parents, guardians, and volunteers in the 21st century, Religious Educators must be open to learning and growing our skills and capacity for personal growth.

Technology is a tool that must be utilized to reach children/youth and their parents. I have modernized many of the traditional RE components by making them accessible to our families outside our building. We need to meet families where they are, and technology is a tool that helps to make that a reality.

At my direction, we implemented a new church management software, Breeze, where I can track attendance data, registration, volunteers, events, and more relating to the RE program. I also serve as our congregational database administrator, a role that has required that I educate members on utilizing this software efficiently, for which I have created online tutorials.

I embrace social media to reach current and future families. I created a Sunnyhill Instagram account and maintain the Sunnyhill Facebook page, both of which are updated regularly with service descriptions, pictures, and event information. I believe these avenues bring our programs and offerings to where many of our families "are" and reach them directly. At the same time, it is important to note that not all families utilize social media. It is imperative to have a multi-platform approach to reaching individuals, and various methods of communication are vital (emails, phone calls, announcements, posts, flyers, and more).

Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism

Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism (ARAOMC), like Technology, must be applied at the foundation of any Religious Education program. It must be a part of the building from the ground up. I have incorporated ARAOMC into teacher training through learning about multicultural education and special needs accommodations. I have opened dialogue with youth and adults to discuss gender pronouns (Coming of Age registration forms, youth registration forms, adult visitor forms, database revision to incorporate pronouns, and name tags that provide space for pronouns), each of which came from a congregational effort to encourage learning and diverse gender expression.

Family Ministry

Summary

The scope of religious education for children and youth cannot happen on Sunday mornings alone. How the family celebrates rituals, breaks bread together, and supports each other in both celebration and struggle are central to a child's spiritual development. One of our roles as religious educators is to open the lines of communication between children and their guardians, create resources to establish meaningful connections within families, and build lifelong partners to continue one's journey toward spiritual wholeness.

I first learned about "theme-based ministry" at LREDA (Liberal Religious Educator's Association) Fall Conference 2014 in Morristown, New Jersey during several workshops led by Sheila Schuh, Rev. Scott Tayler, Eric Bliss, and Karen Bellavance-Grace. I loved the idea of everyone in the congregation journeying together in faith formation. I knew that it would take congregational buy-in at every level. By 2015, our minister Rev. Jim Magaw and I had established the Soul Matters theme-based ministry program in each of our focus areas on Sunday morning - the service and religious education classes. As of 2022, we continue to use the Soul Matters themes for services, RE classes, and Small Groups. What I have found most impactful about utilizing these themes across typical generational divides is that it brings children and their families together for a conversation on the "ride home from church." As a parent of an RE student, I feel the impact of theme-based ministry directly when we converse about how they learned about a particular theme in RE and what it means to them. It opens pathways for conversation that are meaningful for our own family in addition to the families in our congregation.

In my role as a religious educator, I seek to bring the family unit together for activities, conversations, and experiences as well as to grow the congregational "family". I seek to serve the whole community by offering multigenerational opportunities to learn and grow together. It is often said that "it takes a village to raise a child" and a healthy faith community is a part of that village. We can deepen commitment to Unitarian Universalism, our congregation, and each other by establishing opportunities for meaningful connection among children, youth, families, and elders.

Family Ministry is built on nurturing the needs of children, youth, and the adults that care for them. While it is vital in a faith community to create programming that meets the needs of all age groups, a focus on family ministry recognizes the distinct call to serve the family unit in a meaningful way. One program that meets the needs of adults is great. Another program that meets the needs of children is great. Programming that serves the needs of adults and children, together, and connects them in shared community, is faith formation.

Formation

Structured Learning

- “RE Without Walls” LREDA Fall Conference
 - Morristown NJ, 2015
 - Notable workshops attended include
 - Three-part program about theme-based Ministry, led by Karen Bellevance-Grace, Rev. Scott Taylor, Eric Bliss, and Sheila Schuh
 - “Parenting as a Spiritual Practice”, led by Sheila Schuh
- “Lifelong Learning and Beyond” Workshop, Led by Nancy Combs-Morgan, Pat Infante, and Andrea Lerner
 - General Assembly, Louisville Kentucky, 2013

RE Based Professional Work/ Leadership Experience

- Adapted Religious Education programming from a volunteer-to-child experience on Sunday mornings to a parent/guardian-to-child experience during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020)
- Co-organized the “One World” Holiday Event for families at UUCSH (2012-2019)
- Brought families into the Coming of Age ritual by hosting a recognition dinner for families (2012-present)
- Brought families into the Bridging ritual by hosting a dinner night with bridging youth and their parents (2016-present)
- Adapted a Lenten calendar for UUCSH families that focused on fasting, prayer, and service from a UU perspective (2015)
- Organized a family picnic at the end of the 2019 church year to celebrate a year of learning and growing (2019)
- Worked with the UUCSH Youth Group to bring “Spring through the Ages” an all-ages “prom” event (2018)

Application and Integration

Sunnyhill RE @ Home

On a quiet Friday morning in March 2020, I received a phone call from my children's school instructing us that we must pick up our children and that school would be shut down for the next two weeks to help slow the spread of COVID-19. By noon that day, our staff pivoted to preparing for online service, religious education, and more. We did not miss a single Sunday of religious education programming, though it certainly lasted much longer than the two weeks my children were scheduled to be off from school! My children did not return until September 2021, over 18 months after the initial shutdown. For the children and youth in the UUCSH community, the experience was similar. I took what I was experiencing at home with my children and applied it to our programming, seeking to meet families where they were during such a challenging time. It was not long before I heard that many families were "zoomed out", or mentally drained from the amount of time spent in virtual classrooms and meetings. I continued to offer virtual RE classes to elementary, middle school, 8th grade (Coming of Age) students, and our high school youth. In addition, I offered options for Sunnyhill families to engage with the materials at home, on their own time, by making my lesson plans, stories, and activities available for all families (regardless if they came during class times or not). I also provided access to Soul Matters materials for families as well as other resources. The following screenshots show various parts of an "RE @ Home" website I created to share these items with families.



RE 2020 AT A GLANCE

The year 2020 has brought numerous challenges globally and our children and youth are not immune to stress and anxiety that we are all experiencing. This fall in Religious Education classes we will be focusing on community, supporting one another, and growing deeper into our Unitarian Universalist faith. Families are transitioning to home schooling, virtual, or hybrid learning, while working from home or heading into work during a global pandemic, or have lost jobs completely. We understand the weight of the pressures being put onto you. There are multiple options for your children (and you) to continue to learn and grow as Unitarian Universalists and Sunnyhillers to help make RE not just another thing on the calendar, but something you look forward to as a place of respite.

[Returning Families Register Here](#)

[New Families Register Here](#)

PLEASE CLICK BELOW TO LEARN ABOUT THE VARIOUS OPTIONS FOR SUNNYHILL FAMILIES.

[RE on Demand](#)

Sunnyhill RE is utilizing TWO at home RE programs for families to use on their own.

Soulful Home: It's hard to carve out time for faith-full family experiences, so many of us try to weave spiritual exploration into the routine spaces of family life. Helping parents create this sacred space in their daily lives is what Soulful Home is about. Soulful Home offers opportunities for making sacred space out of the dinner table, the neighborhood, the mailbox, the bedside, the porch and during play. From discussion question prompts to activities and games, these materials offer ways to incorporate small moments of spirituality throughout the day.

Chalice Home sets out to help families intentionally carve out space to stay connected to the sources of meaning, connection and renewal in their lives. These resources help families create meaningful worship together in a fun and engaging way. Families will make and light chalices, set intentions, create rituals, and more.

[Sunday morning RE](#)

PreK-5th Grade will meet on Sunday mornings for RE class at 9 am via Zoom! During RE we will light our chalice, share Joys and Concerns, listen to a story, have a short discussion, and an activity (meditation, dance, song, etc). Families must be registered in advance to receive the Zoom link. Registration link can be found toward the top of this page.

[Crossing Paths Middle School RE](#)

Students in grades 6-8th will be utilizing Crossing Paths, a Soul Matters Religious Education Curriculum focusing on World Religions. To see a sample Crossing Paths lesson, click here: [Crossing Paths Sample](#)

Middle School RE will meet on the first and third Thursday of each month at 4pm.

[Youth Group](#)

High School Youth Will meet twice a month on Wednesday evenings (2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month) for check-in and discussion.

[Coming of Age](#)

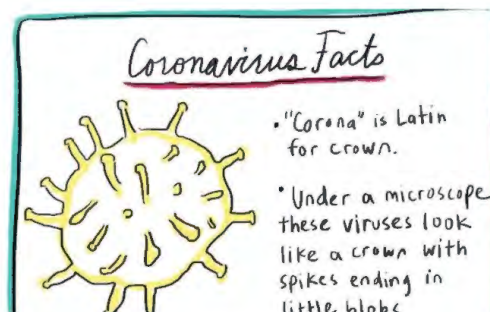
Our COA class of 2020-2021 is designed for current 8th and 9th graders and will take place twice per month, on the second and fourth Thursday at 4pm.





FAMILY RESOURCES

CONVERSATIONS



MOVEMENT

Cosmic Kids Yoga

Making yoga and mindfulness fun for kids since 2012. Free adventures on YouTube. Online kids yoga teacher training. Kids yoga DVDs. Kids yoga class plans.

ART



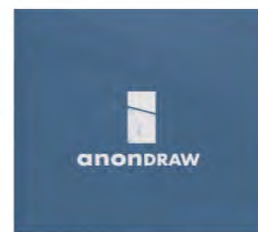
Doodles and Coloring Pages

Many adults are finding mindfulness, centering, and calming through coloring and doodling. (It's not just for kids anymore!) WorshipWeb is happy to offer these images, along with these ideas for how to use them: ...

UUWorld

Zentangle chalices, doodling, and meditation

Meditative doodling as a Unitarian Universalist spiritual practice.



www.anondraw.com/

flockdraw.com/

RE ON DEMAND



MAY STORY

FAMILY WORSHIP GUIDE ON STORY

A Personal Story to Start Things Off

Begin with parents telling a personal story related to the monthly theme. This helps put the worship into context and reminds your children that this family worship is connected to the wider theme exploration that your entire church is doing this month. So, for this family worship, begin by sharing a favorite photo that "contains" or helps you hold on to a beloved story from your life. Maybe it is a photo of yourself as a teen. Maybe it is an early photo of a pet. Or a photo from the genealogy of your family. Don't invite others to share their similar stories yet.

Reflection

I am proud of how quickly we shifted from physical learning to virtual learning in March 2020. The site I built was full of items for families to utilize together. One aspect that I would have liked to have incorporated was a way to gauge engagement with the materials, utilizing Google Analytics, which tracks website traffic.

The Soul Matters Program was an invaluable resource during this time. It enabled me to focus on sharing and connection instead of searching and compiling. In the future, I would like to do more with the resources that they provide that bridge the connection between the RE classrooms and worship in a more focused way.

One World Holiday Event

Each year at UUCSH we honor the winter holiday season with an all-ages event called “One World”. While I did not begin this tradition, I have kept it moving forward and in tune with our congregational mission- “To build a just and compassionate community both within and beyond our walls.” My role in this event started with merely participating in 2012 to co-leading within just a few years. I share responsibility for finding volunteers, creating multigenerational activities, planning the evening, and promoting the event to our families.

This event consists of multigenerational activities to learn about various winter holiday traditions, led by those connected to the faith community from which it comes. Previous activities have included playing dreidel, creating Diwali lanterns, and designing crowns to learn about Three Kings Day (Epiphany), to name a few. The theme of giving is always present throughout the event: families are invited to make holiday cards, “Santa” asks kids how they plan to spread holiday cheer, and donations are accepted for local organizations. This event is always free and includes a meal.

WELCOME TO

ONE WORLD



5:00-6:30 PM

- CRAFTS AND ACTIVITIES (DINING, CHOIR, AND RED OAK ROOMS)
- ECO-VENDORS (FELLOWSHIP HALL)
- SOCIAL JUSTICE TABLES (FELLOWSHIP HALL)
- HELP YOURSELF TO POTLUCK (SANCTUARY)

6:30 PM

CAROLING (SANCTUARY)

6:45 PM

VISIT FROM SUNNYHILL SANTA
(SANCTUARY)

7:00 PM

DESSERT (FELLOWSHIP HALL)
CHILDREN'S MOVIE (MAIN ROOM
DOWNSTAIRS)





One World 2019



Reflection

The One World Holiday event continues to be a tradition that is much beloved in our congregation. The event is always evolving - primarily because we rely on individuals in our congregations to share their *own* traditions with our community and because the causes we focus on may change. The main focus will be the same - bringing families of all shapes and sizes together to celebrate the holidays with their wider congregational family and to contribute to our local community.

Lenses

Technology

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, when all in-person activities were shut down, I jumped at the opportunity to utilize my skills with technology, including website design and graphic creation to create an access point for Sunnyhill families to engage with religious education materials as a family unit. By creating these resources one at a time as the need presented itself, I curated a comprehensive toolkit for families. Other aspects, such as making Time For All Ages segments that were virtual but still interactive, were more challenging. Through hard work and perseverance, I learned the skill of video creation and editing that will prove useful for many years to come.

Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism

The role of ARAOMC in our religious education program has expanded as I continue to deepen my understanding and relationship with it. I have always seen myself as an ally to those in marginalized communities, but it took longer for me to realize that I had an active role to play in creating the new world that I hoped to see - a role in creating the beloved community. I seek to bring an ARAOMC lens to the RE Program by consistently advocating for cultural appreciation versus appropriation when learning about holiday events (for example, we seek out individuals to teach about a particular holiday or tradition *from their personal experience* as someone connected to that tradition) as well as deliberately choosing items to bring to our families (stories, resources, activities) that lift marginalized voices. One such resource that I created can be seen below. Please note that this was primarily utilized as a tool to help families begin a conversation with their children during the Spring of 2020 after the murder of George Floyd and does not include much original content. This resource served as a tool to connect RE Families to materials that already existed, primarily by individuals that were within the African American community.

RACISM IN AMERICA: RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Dear black parents and parents of black children,

I love you. I stand with you. I mourn with you.

Dear white parents and parents of white children,

George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor. Say their names and picture their faces. Think of their stories and how their lives were taken because by the white supremacy culture that we are steeped in in America. As parents, our most important and lasting act of allyship are the conversations we are having with our children right now. Here are some resources to help to guide your way.



BOOKS FOR YOU

[How to Be an Antiracist](#), Ibram X. Kendi

[White Fragility](#), Robin DiAngelo

[Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America](#), Ibram X Kendi

[Raising White Kids](#), Jennifer Harvey

[So You Want to Talk About Race](#), Ijeoma Oluo

[The New Jim Crow](#), Michelle Alexander

[American Lynching](#), Ashraf Rushdy

[Just Mercy](#), Bryan Stevenson

TO READ WITH YOUR CHILDREN

[BOOK COLLECTIONS: Anti-Racism For Kids 101](#)

TO WATCH WITH YOUR CHILDREN

[CNN / Sesame Street Racism Town Hall](#)

ARTICLES

[I Live in Minneapolis. This Is What I Told My 4-Year-Old](#)

[The Top 5 Reasons Well Meaning White Parents Do Not Discuss Race With Their White Children](#)

[How do I make sure I'm not raising the next Amy Cooper?](#)

TOOLS

[Resources for talking about race, racism and racialized violence with kids](#)

[Your Kids Aren't Too Young to Talk About Race: Resource Roundup](#)

[Juneteenth RE Lesson](#)

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

As Unitarian Universalists, we have a history of standing up for racial justice- but have also been silent in times when it mattered most. We can not be silent anymore. The UUA and Unitarian Universalists across the country are currently engaged in dismantling white supremacy and showing up for racial justice.

Learn more via the links below.

<https://www.uua.org/action/statements/support-black-lives-matter-movement>

<https://www.uua.org/justice/dismantle-white-supremacy>

<https://www.uua.org/racial-justice>

<https://kennywiley.com/2014/10/15/who-are-my-people-a-black-unitarian-universalist-on-selma-and-ferguson/>

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/ball-didnt-break-us>

"WHAT CAN I DO?" BY ALLY HENNY

1. Listen to people of color share their experiences.

2. Educate yourself. That means reading books and connecting with anti racist resources.

3. Pay reparations to individual POC that have expended their emotional labor dealing with your privilege. Pay reparations to POC institutions. Pay activists and content creators for your education

4. Disrupt the racism that you see from your fellow people of whiteness. Tell people that they're being racist. Refuse to entertain insensitive talk anywhere, including this app.

5. Get uncomfortable. Put yourself in situations with people who are not afraid to speak their truth to you.

6. Do the work. Dedicate time and energy to learning to deal with your whiteness. Since you were born, you have been exposed to a lot of negative ideas about people of color. It is going to take a lot of time to dismantle the things that you thought were normal and okay.

7. Be ready to be offended and to have your feelings hurt. People are tired of being oppressed and a lot of folks are gonna let you have it right now. Will you learn or will you retreat into comfort.

8. Listen to people of color who you might not necessarily agree with rather than defaulting to the same voices that don't challenge whiteness.

9. Don't demand emotional labor from your black, brown, and indigenous friends. Especially right now. Take whatever they have to offer and don't make demands upon them.

10. Manage your white tears. Your eyes are being opened to the injustice in the world and that's a good thing. But your black, brown, and indigenous friends should not have to wipe your tears when they're too busy wiping their own.

Human and Faith Development

Summary

Theories of faith and human development can help educators create programming and set curricula to suit the needs of children in an RE program. Praxis is what is happening regularly in the congregation (in classrooms and beyond). The magic is in the spot where theory and praxis meet. As religious educators, we should be informed of the work of education theorists like Piaget, and spirituality theorists, like Fowler. We should go further and understand where these two intersect, apply to Unitarian Universalism, and be knowledgeable about “Learning Types and their Needs”, as Rev. Dan Harper explained.

The reality facing Unitarian Universalist religious education classes in the 21st century, particularly post-COVID, is that we are competing with more stressors than ever. Our congregations are splintered after two-plus years of living through a global pandemic where there was minimal useful guidance from our local and national governments. Some families have found other ways to spend their Sunday morning, and will likely not return to our buildings. We are at a time in our society where people are waking up to the abuses that corporate culture has demanded and saying “no” in droves. “No” to the extra hours, “no” to the unlivable wages, “no” to being exhausted all of the time. As a parent, I feel this personally and have been cutting out many additional tasks myself. I do not have the capacity or willingness to lead every PTA function, bring snacks to all sporting events, or participate in community clean-up drives like I once did... the “no’s” seem to flow from my mouth much more easily than they ever have before.

So, our task as religious educators, serving congregations at this moment, is to find a way to bring this understanding of human and faith development into our classrooms on Sunday mornings in an accessible way that suits the needs of the children as well as the capacity of the volunteers. For this liminal time and space, while our society is finding its footing in this new way forward, we need to remain flexible, focus on community, and create space for individuals of all ages to bring their full selves for learning and spiritual nourishment.

Formation

Structured Learning

- Bachelor of Arts, Religious Studies
 - College of Charleston, Charleston SC, 2005-2009
 - Relevant courses include: Sociology of the Family, Introduction to Psychology, Introduction to Education
- “Fundamentals of Healthy Youth Groups” led by Evin Carvill-Zierner
 - First Unitarian Church, Shadyside Pennsylvania, 2012, 12 hours
- Spirit Play Training, 2018
 - First Unitarian Church, Shadyside Pennsylvania, 2018

- “A New Way to Radical Inclusivity”, led by Nancy Combs-Morgan, Suzanne Fast, and Mark Bernstein
 - General Assembly, Portland OR, 2015
- “Bridging and Beyond”, Led by UUA Resource Development Office, UUA Staff, and LREDA
 - General Assembly, Louisville KY, 2013
- GA Talks: Multigenerational and Community Ministry, Led by Rev. Christina Leone Tracy, Lincoln W. Statler, Kenny Wiley
 - General Assembly, Louisville KY, 2013
- Introduction to Education
 - College of Charleston, Charleston SC, 2006
- Teacher Cadet Program
 - Hilton Head High School, Hilton Head SC, 2005
 - High School program which earned college credit that involved working in an elementary school classroom for the semester and creating a personal philosophy of education; earned “Teacher Cadet of the Year” which included a scholarship

RE Based Professional Work/ Leadership Experience

- Created an entirely virtual religious education experience for children and youth during the first year of the COVID19 Pandemic (2020)
- Designing a Nursery, RE, and Youth Group space seeking to meet the needs of those age groups (2012-present)
- Collaborating with Minister to bring rituals to children and youth and their families (2012-present)

Life Experiences

- Parenting two children, one of which has behavioral and sensory needs (2011-present)
- School and PTA Volunteer (2016-present)
 - Served on the Brookline PreK-8th PTA Board as Membership chair, Dine-for-Good Coordinator, and Volunteer chair

Application and Integration

Teacher Training- Special Needs Inclusion

After attending the Multicultural Religious Education Renaissance Module in 2019, I was excited to revamp our RE teaching training course. I recruited two fabulous volunteers, Lindsay and Christi, to help with child development and special needs inclusion because they are two experts in our congregation.

The below sections that reflect Child Development and Classroom Management, Special Needs Inclusion, and Multiculturalism show just a snapshot from a much larger RE Training

Class, which included sharing the many resources available to RE teachers, a safety scavenger hunt, and CPR training.

<h1>What to Expect</h1> <h2>Sunnyhill RE Volunteer Training 2019 Schedule</h2>	
9:30-10:15	Chalice Lighting, Covenanting, Sharing Stories
10:15-10:45	Resources
10:45-11:15	Scavenger Hunt and Safety
11:15-11:30	Break
11:30-12:15	Lesson Planning
12:15-1:00	Lunch- Chipotle
1:00-1:30	Classroom Management
1:30-2:00	Multiculturalism and Special Needs Inclusion
2:00-3:00	CPR Training- Provided by MRTSA

Lesson Planning with Activity (Written by Lindsay Downs, RE Volunteer, and Educator)

OBJECTIVE- Identify and apply key components necessary in creating and executing an effective lesson

11:30-11:40- Introduce key components of lesson planning

- Preparedness
- Objectives
- Tasks
- Time stamps

11:40-12:00- Create lesson plan using Soul Matters document and template

12:00-12:10- Lesson plan share

12:10-12:15- Wrap up

Which style does each activity address?



Creating an inclusive classroom where students with disabilities will be successful (Presented by Christi Kreg, RE Volunteer and Trainer/Clinical Coordinator for a local behavioral and mental health service, utilizing Sally Patton's Welcoming Children with Special Needs)

"Accommodating is not the same as inclusion"

- People first language
- Ritual and consistency
- Clear transitions with warning
- Use visuals along with words whenever able
- Limit requests for students to read aloud
- Teacher expectations make a difference - always have a positive and loving view of your students
- Many children would rather be seen as "bad" than "dumb" build their self esteem by highlighting their strengths.
- The hurt that troubled children and youth cause is never greater than the pain they feel. Fear, anxiety, bad morning at home
- There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals. Some kids are going to need more of your time, patience and attention.
- Request desired behaviors rather than focusing on undesirable behaviors
- Use positive reinforcement instead of relying only on punishment

- Providing indirect praise for desired behaviors can be effective
- Reward direction, not perfection.
- Be generous with your attention. A child who is being disruptive is seeking attention. "You can ignore the behavior . . . but you cannot ignore the need."
- Do not compare one child's behavior with that of others. An individual child can control only his or her own behavior, so focus on how that behavior can be improved.
- Listen to their stories.
- Find each child's "island of competence." Find out what the child likes to do and feels good about, and then figure out a way to incorporate that into the church setting. For example, if the child likes to grow plants, give him or her the responsibility of watering and taking care of the plants in the church. This will be even more effective if you give him or her the official title of "Caretaker of the Plants" and let the entire congregation know about it.

A child who has attention-deficit disorder

You have always had a lot of energy and can't stand to sit still. You like to talk about everything. You know adults think you are often disruptive and uncontrollable, but you don't understand why everyone gets so upset. Other kids think you're weird and deliberately trying to be bad. You like to build things and climb trees.

"It was awful at the last church. I got kicked out of the program three times. They kept doing these boring discussion groups, so I invented stuff to do to keep me busy, which is when I got into trouble. Some of the kids liked doing those things with me, and then they got into trouble, too, and couldn't be friends with me anymore. I don't understand why this happens, and it makes me so angry. No one understands. I don't think this new church will be any better. No one ever likes me."

A child with Asperger's syndrome (high functioning)

You know you are different, but you don't know why. You don't understand people; they're like alien objects. It makes you very uncomfortable to be touched. You focus on one thing at a time but not for long. You like consistency and get very confused when the rules or plans are changed. You like dinosaurs and know everything about the different species—when they lived and what they ate. You wish they still lived so you could have one as a pet.

"Mommy and Daddy are making me go to another church. I Would rather stay home and build dinosaurs or read books about dinosaurs. I don't understand why the other kids aren't interested in dinosaurs like I am. The kids annoy me. Anyway, I would much rather play by myself. At the last church, they wouldn't let me talk about dinosaurs, and they wanted me to hold hands all the time. They Were always changing what they were doing each Sunday, and I got terribly confused. Sometimes, it was too much and I got angry. Then they made my parents come and get me. I Like To do stuff, though. I hope I can bring my dinosaurs to this new church."

A child with a learning disability

Sometimes, you feel like you must be from another planet because when you talk, people look at you as if you are strange and not making any sense. You try so hard to understand, but evidently you don't because you're always screwing up. You think you're creative and intelligent, but you have real difficulty reading the words and doing the math. You're always inventing things in your head, and you love to draw.

"I hate school! Everyone there thinks I'm dumb, except for my tutor. I have all these special classes, so the kids know I'm stupid. In the regular classes, I get so anxious I'm going to screw up that I almost always have a stomachache. The last church we went to was not much better than school. They kept having the kids read these stories, and everyone knew that the reason I never volunteered to read is because I don't read very well. The discussions were interesting, but whenever I was asked for my opinion, I would get so scared that I couldn't say anything. I always had an answer afterward, but then it was too late and they would be talking about something else. I have good ideas, so I hope I can share what is inside of me at the new church."

For more information I suggest reading https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/lfd/welcoming_children_specialneeds.pdf

Classroom Management Discussion Questions

1. What are the most common behavioral issues you see in your RE classroom?
2. What are barriers to appropriate behavior and what can be done to minimize them?
3. What are successful strategies have you tried to apply when addressing classroom behavior?
4. What are successful strategies have you tried to apply when addressing classroom behavior?
5. How do you keep students engaged who do not wish to participate in the classroom?
6. In what ways do you promote a positive classroom environment?
7. In what ways are you proactive in hindering student misbehavior?
8. How can relationships with students be utilized to encourage positive behavior?

Reflection

For me, this was an ideal RE Training. I had engaged volunteers, great material, and buy-in from those present. Unfortunately, training this robust has not occurred in the years that followed, due to COVID-19 and the challenges it brought in unexpected places. I pray that one day we will get back to this level of volunteer engagement, though I am sure there will be different items addressed when we do! In the future, I would like to expand it further, possibly to a two-day training, to include more time for group projects and discussion. I would also like to update the language and resources to reflect current knowledge and availability. One aspect that I would love to bring forward from this training was utilizing the experts in our congregation to share their experiences with their fellow RE teachers.

Creating Spaces (Physical and Virtual) To Meet Spiritual and Developmental Needs

A brief look at the last ten years at UUCSH includes:

2012 Begin Position as DRE

2013 Capital Campaign Begins

2014 Interim Minister Retires, New Minister Begins

2016 Building Project Begins, Sunday Services/RE held at local Rec Center

2017 Building Project Completed

2020 COVID-19 Pandemic Closes Doors Once Again

During the last ten years at UUCSH, we experienced two ministers and one major building renovation before the COVID-19 pandemic closed our doors and forced us to relearn how to create space for worship and religious education. Our original building was a mansion built in the 1920s, which utilized former bedrooms and laundry rooms for RE classrooms. When we closed the building for renovations in 2016, we moved Sunday morning worship and RE to a local recreation center - just two large rooms separated by a hallway. In 2017 we reopened our doors to a much larger sanctuary with beautiful windows, a new nursery, and two new classrooms on our main floor - but in the process lost four “old” classrooms and thus had to continue to use the original part of the building for RE. The new RE spaces were designed to be multi-purpose, not exclusively for RE use. The older parts of the building that were still in use were only slightly updated or modified, if at all. As the adults were excitedly stepping into the beautiful new sanctuary, the youth stepped back into the musty old basement. What messages are we sending to our children and youth if we spend resources and energy making adult spaces beautiful while ignoring youth rooms? As Angus MacLean taught us, the method of how religious education is taught can be as important as the curriculum itself. I seek to bring value and thoughtfulness into our religious education classrooms because our children should not be treated as an afterthought. I took the role of creating spaces that deserved the presence of our young people personally and took part in the design and work team myself. The outcome of that extra effort is clear - our children and youth feel cared for and valued in a space designed just for them.

Whether our religious education classes are taught in an old mansion, a recreation center, a brand new classroom, or virtually, the space should reflect the young people utilizing it. This could happen in many ways, from a renovation of teen space with couches and murals, a bright and colorful PreK classroom with picture cues for what to expect that day, or bringing items each week to a rented facility that connects the children and the community. Children and youth are more present in spaces designed with them in mind, and when this is not possible, then curated in some way to suit their needs as children.

Below are snapshots that showcase how the various classrooms were designed to meet the needs of the young people using them. One of the images shows children outside. We utilize our church grounds as classroom space whenever possible! The image shows children (and volunteers) engaged in a nature yoga practice.



Religious Education



Youth Group Room



Nursery

The below example shows a virtual RE Class utilizing Soul Matters materials adapted for our children. While meeting with the RE children online, I always incorporated the following: Welcome, Chalice Lighting, Wonderbox, Story, Discussion, Activity, and Closing. I also included our physical space when possible. For this particular lesson, I shared the story of the Sunnyhill Tapestry (pictured “in the Wonderbox”) and the quilt tradition at our congregation. For an activity, we clicked on different quilts to learn about who made them and other information. During each Sunday lesson, I introduced the Wonderbox image in a different way for children to try and figure out. This caught their attention right from the beginning. The activity at the end often included games that would get the children moving around while on their devices.

STORIES REMIND US WHO WE ARE: AS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS

Sunnyhill RE 5/15/2021

CHALICE LIGHTING

We are Unitarian Universalists.
We are the church of the open mind,
The loving heart,
And the helping hands.
Together we care for our earth
And work for peace and friendship in
our world.



WONDER BOX



WONDER BOX



WONDER BOX



Tapestry

The tapestry was created from an picture of Sunnyhill families playing on a tree in South Park. Many years ago, when Sunnyhill was just becoming a church, they used to have picnics in the park that were kind of like a big family picnic. This image was from one of those picnics.

It shows individuals of different ages and colors climbing a tree and playing together. This tapestry serves as a reminder that Sunnyhill is like a big family of different types of people on different paths coming together. The tapestry itself was made by ages as a large group project at Sunnyhill- the entire congregation came together and had a hand at creating it!

These family picnics in the early days of Sunnyhill helped to bring the church members closer together and the tapestry is a reminder of the Sunnyhill church "family".

Virtual RE



The spaces we create, whether virtual or physical, must be created with a focus on child development. When we shifted to virtual learning from classroom learning, this notion was integral to the structure of each Zoom classroom. For our youngest children in RE, this meant incorporating our rituals from the physical classroom as much as possible - using the typical chalice lighting, using the same Wonderbox they had in class, and focusing on connecting with each other and with our church community as much as possible. For our middle schoolers, there was more of a tech-driven approach. We shared lots of videos and interactive activities. I

created silly Bitmojis to make each slide engaging and focused on ways to get those in this age group to engage with one another and the material in a fun way.



Finally, in our youth group, we split our time between having conversations about the world and the challenges of virtual learning, the pandemic, and more and playing games using JackBox (an online interactive multiplayer game). Many of our youth in this cohort felt anxious about the world, exhausted from virtual school, and disconnected from their community. I focused on growing their connections with one another and giving space for both laughter and hard conversations when needed.

Now that we are returning to physical classrooms again, we are taking the things we learned from virtual learning and applying them where possible, including a focus on connection and keeping the fun!

Reflection

The spaces that we create for children and youth matter. I am proud of the work we have done to shape our classrooms (both physical and virtual) to accommodate the needs of the children and youth utilizing them. In the future, I would like to create more space dedicated to meditation and quiet as well as sensory-friendly environments.

Ritual

Ritual is a vital component in every faith community on earth. The practice of communion for Catholics, Salat for Muslims, and Mantra recitation in Buddhism are examples of meaningful rituals. For Unitarian Universalists, we light our chalice each Sunday as we all gather for worship and sing familiar songs, among other things. As Kate Tweedie Erslev (now Katie Covey, per UUA website) explains in Full Circle: Fifteen Ways to Grow Lifelong UUs, ceremonies and rituals “form a common thread in the lives of our members” and our children are where we begin to weave that thread. At UUCSH we celebrate child dedication, Coming of Age, and Bridging for children and youth as well as other rites of passage like new member ceremonies, marriage, name and/or pronoun change, and memorial services. For the programming I am directly involved with, I seek to expand the emphasis on the ritual and make it extra special.

The below samples show the child dedication certificate template that I created and images from child dedication ceremonies and Coming of Age students following their service.

THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH
OF THE SOUTH HILLS

Certificate of Dedication

On May 19, 1820

WILLIAM FRANCIS
CHANNING

Child of
William Ellery Channing & Ruth Gibbs

Rev. William Ellery Channing
Minister



Bridging

The following example is from the 2020 Bridging Ceremony, which was written alongside Rev. Jim Magaw, utilizing the following resources:

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/blessing/blessing-bridging>,

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/ritual-prayer/be-blessing-you-already-are>

Jen: Welcome everyone to our Virtual Bridging Ceremony! We so appreciate seeing all of your faces together as we honor our Seniors- Emma, Lexy, Simon, and Elliot.

Jim: When we welcome young people as infants or children into our community, we often do so by giving them roses—tightly closed buds on stems from which the thorns have been removed. The buds are symbols of life just beginning, whose unfolding we will experience petal by petal, just as they will. The thornless stems are vivid images of our intent to protect the children of our church family from all that could be hurtful—to make their path smooth as their lives unfold.

The youth before us here today, Emma, Lexy, Simon, and Elliot, are at the other edge of childhood and adulthood, and it is fitting once more to use those symbols, those images from the past, to speak to them, and to ourselves, of what is to come.

Again a rose. Not the tight bud of babyhood now, but a larger, more mature rose, closer to opening into a full and glorious flower. The stem, this time, is not so carefully stripped of thorns. We can no longer hold away the hurts and dangers of adulthood, any more than we can keep this rose from opening.

Though adult life is occasionally sharply painful, as well as rich in color and texture, we urge our young adults to engage it fully. And while we are not able to protect them, we try to give them the tools to protect themselves:

- Values, by which to measure lives of worth;
- Decision-making skills, and the knowledge of how to think instead of what we think;
- A heritage of the right of conscience, and the need to act on what the conscience demands;
- And a religious community in which to test and refine the possible directions of their lives.

Jen: In our religious tradition, it is not just ministers and religious professionals who have power to bless. Each of us has the power to bless another, and to bless the world. Therefore I invite everyone here to participate in this blessing. The words are ordinary words, but we make the blessing real through our shared intention. [Invite congregants form a virtual connection by raising their hands. Ask family and youth group members to be the first ones.]

Jen: Emma, Lexy, Simon, and Elliot, as you step forward into your next chapter, we send with you our fondest hopes and blessings.

Jim: May life bring enough challenge to fuel your dreams, enough affirmation to honor your gifts, and enough love and nurture to give your spirit peace.

Jen: Believe in your vision. Follow your dreams.

Jim: And know always that, when you return to us, here you will find the hands of friends. Amen!

Jim: And so we now can say goodbye to the child—with confidence, as well as some lingering wistfulness—and eagerly greet today's bridgers, Emma Chothani, Lexy Lott, Simon Mortimer, and Elliot Pullen, as young adults.

Reflection

The above examples showcase our focus on the importance of creating rituals for young people and their families in our congregations. While our child dedication has mainly stayed the same, our COA and Bridging Ceremonies have evolved over the last few years. The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to consider different ways to do things, and how we celebrate rites of

passage has also changed by necessity. The things our Minister, Rev. Jim Magaw, and I created provided meaning and depth in a new way. As we move into the next phase of spiritual growth and development at our congregation, post-COVID, we will continue to incorporate the lessons we learned over the last few years.

Bridging Service Reflection- Delivered during the 2021 Bridging Service

Reflections/challenges of RE this last year: Bridging Service Reflection - 2021

"In 1937 a woman named Ruth was preparing to bake her favorite recipe, "Butter Drop Do" cookies which dated back to colonial times, according to Linda Stradley. These yummy sweets used baker's chocolate and were more like little cakes. One day Ruth found herself without that all important baker's chocolate and only had semisweet chocolate on hand, which she chopped up and stirred into the dough. She assumed the chocolate would melt and spread throughout each cookie. Instead the chocolate bits held their shape and created a sensation. She called her new creation the Toll House Crunch Cookies, named after the restaurant that she ran in Boston. Betty Crocker brought the new cookie to the masses when she used it in her radio series "Famous Foods from Famous Eating Places." Ruth approached the Nestlé Company. They agreed to print what would become the Toll House Cookie recipe on the wrapper of the Semi-Sweet Chocolate Bar. The company developed a scored semi sweet chocolate bar with a small cutting implement so making the chocolate chunks would be easier. According to the story, part of this agreement included supplying Ruth with all of the chocolate she could use to make her delicious cookies for the rest of her life. And Chocolate Chip cookies, that we all know and love made their way into the hearts and bellies of people across the country.

Back in the Fall we started our church year lacking so many of the ingredients needed to make Religious Education like we are used to. We didn't have our beloved space, or get to see our friends in person. We didn't have a chance to make lots of crafts and play games with one another the way we have enjoyed for years. We missed the presence of one another in every age group. We missed our teachers and caregivers that we got to learn and grow with on so many Sunday mornings.

It was hard. It wasn't the same. Both kids and families were "zoomed out", and their DRE was too.

And, it was also transformative.

In our PreK-5th Grade RE Class we brought joy to one another every single Sunday morning. We laughed, we had scavenger hunts, we meditated, we listened, we opened our hearts, and we explored big topics, like racism, intersectionality, and gender identity. Annmarie and Ms. Christi, and Max, and Maria, and Eva, Denali, and so many other friends logged in and gave our time together purpose and meaning- which also brought purpose and meaning when I was personally struggling. Remember a couple of weeks ago when Rev. Jim spoke about "languishing?" That was exactly how I felt through so much of the last year. But seeing the faces of these kiddos each week brought me so much joy and hope. They were absolutely the chocolate chips to my cookies.

In our Middle school class we learned about world religions such as Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Paganism, Hinduism, and Buddhism- as well as our own Unitarian Universalism. We visited other places of worship, virtually, and got to learn from youth participants in different faiths from around the world. McKenna, Evan, Caisey, and Finn opened up to learning the problems and solutions of the different major world religions and by doing so dove deeper into their own beliefs and values.

Our high school students spent the year focused on community building and really just having a place to hang out and be with one another, and bring their whole, genuine, selves. We played games, we answered silly questions, we discussed deep topics. But most of all, we were present with one another. Ella, Taij, Owen, and Alex, with and of course Mr. Jay Pullen brought laughs and light in a sometimes very dark year.

This last year was a challenge in so many ways. There were times that it was down right exhausting. But as we bring it to a close and I have the opportunity to reflect- it was a chocolate chip kind of year. We started without so many of the ingredients we wanted. But, we added others- like zoom, and youtube, and Bitmojis to add the joy back in. Religious Education is not the building, or the curriculum, or the supply closet. It is in the community we share and the conversations we have. What we created, together, was affirming and valuable and gave meaning and purpose when there were days where it was so hard to find. I am so grateful to the chocolate chip cookies of a year we created together.

In the coming summer months I look forward to seeing all of the smiling faces of the children and their families in real life once again. I look forward to growing and creating and learning together. I believe that Unitarian Universalism is a life affirming and soul filling faith and religious education for children and youth is our most important task, and I so look forward to being with you to continue that work in person.”

Reflection

The above reflection comes from the Bridging Service in June 2021. I include it here because it summarizes the first year of COVID-19 in our religious education programming and how the classes focused on the spiritual, emotional, and human needs of the children and youth present. There are plenty of things I wish we could have done differently during those times and we likely lost track of some families and children along the way. The connections we maintained, though, were valuable and offered meaning to those involved, and for that, I am deeply grateful.

Right Relations & Professional Ethics

Summary

Church work is simultaneously fascinating and demanding. Outside of ministry, there is not a clear or singular path forward when one determines they want to seek the position of religious educator, congregational administrator, membership coordinator, music director, and the various other roles that are needed in Unitarian Universalist congregations (and other religious traditions) across the world. Throughout a typical week in my role, I might need to book and plan travel itineraries for a youth trip to Boston, plan a fundraiser, communicate various programs and create graphics, utilize social media, create time sheets for childcare providers, schedule volunteers, find recipes for homemade “play-doh” without gluten to allow full participation for a child with celiacs, manage child safety clearances and keep paperwork up to date, and create a meaningful Time for All Ages that coincides with the weekly sermon topic. A religious educator wears so many hats - travel agent, fundraiser, human resources manager, librarian, administrator, and more... A UU religious educator must be independently driven and focused and constantly looking for their own learning opportunities because this role requires us to be so many things and yet keep our primary focus on the mission of our religious education program (*To create an affirming atmosphere that fosters personal growth and learning of UU values in an interdependent community*).

I must complete the tasks listed above (and more!) while keeping in right relationship with the staff team, the congregation we serve, and the community. The [LREDA Code of Professional Practices](#) gives an insightful starting point for religious educators stepping into this role, which is likely different from many other professional positions they have held in other fields. Professional ethics for a religious educator includes maintaining appropriate boundaries with the congregation and other staff members, working as a part of a staff team to ensure the needs of the congregation are fulfilled, advancing the position of religious educator by educating about compensation and benefits, and most importantly- advocating for the children, youth, and families in our programs.

Formation

Structured Learning

- Administration of Religious Education Renaissance Module
 - Near Youngstown Ohio, February 2013, 15 hours
- Mentorship from Religious Educator Greta Porter 2012-2014
- LREDA Fall Conference (Morristown (2015), Denver (2018), Baltimore (2019), Birmingham (Virtual, 2022)
- “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Mandated and Permissive Reporting in Pennsylvania”
 - University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work (online), January 2015, 3 hours

- “Restorative Justice and Family Circles”, Led by Sheila Schuh
 - Ohio Meadville LREDA Retreat, Wheeling WV, 2019
- “Safer Congregations”, Led by Rev. Debra Haffner
 - General Assembly Workshop, Louisville KY, 2013

RE Based Professional Work/ Leadership Experience

- Implementation of changes in Pennsylvania law regarding volunteers working with Children and Youth (2015-present)
- LREDA Endowment Committee Member (2016-2018)
- LREDA Ohio Meadville Chapter Leadership
 - 2013-2022, held roles including Vice-President, Secretary (multiple times), and Retreat Planner (multiple times)
- Advanced the religious educator position from 25/hours a week with no health benefits and paid below UUA Compensation Guidelines in 2012 to 40/hours a week with full health benefits and within UUA Compensation Guidelines through persistent self-advocating and education (2012-present)

Application and Integration

Nursery Handbook / Toward a Safe Congregation Policy

My first mission as a religious educator was drafting a nursery handbook. I was concerned about the lack of policies and procedures that protected the youngest children at our congregation and, as a parent of a young child, this was an issue that I saw as urgent and got to work right away! Within just a few months I had a working nursery handbook utilized by our childcare team.

As I was learning about what it means to be a religious educator in our congregation, I dove into researching best practices and guidelines from neighborhood churches, other UU congregations, the UUA website, and other childcare providers. Our congregation's policies and procedures document had zero guidance for anything about children - with one exception, which stated “Sponsors of church events at UUUSH which provide child care are responsible for securing child care providers.” After the creation of the Nursery Handbook and learning more about Safe Congregations, I reached out to the Sunnyhill Board of Trustees to encourage the adoption of a congregation-wide Safe Congregation policy. A small team of Sunnyhill Board members began the process while I provided direction, feedback, and resources regarding best practices and Pennsylvania state law, which was drastically changing at the time. In 2016 we passed the “Toward a Safe Congregation Policy.” Passing these important policies is only the first step towards creating safer congregations. The work of implementing policies is the most vital part! My job is to ensure the congregation is following the policies we set forth and update them as needed, which is ongoing.

In addition to educating our congregation about Pennsylvania's changing laws, I helped to educate fellow religious educators. The legal changes directly affected congregations, schools, and every other organization that works with children and youth in the state of

Pennsylvania- yet we received no direct communication from the state to help us determine what the changes meant and how to implement or enforce them. I sought outside resources for my education and then shared my knowledge with local colleagues.

Full Nursery Policy and Toward A Safe Congregation Policy can be found here:

<https://www.sunnyhill.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/UUCSH-Toward-a-Safe-Congregation-Policy.pdf>

Excerpts from Nursery Policy

1

Nursery Handbook For Parents and Caregivers



Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills
1240 Washington Rd · Pittsburgh, PA 15228
(412) 561-6277 · www.sunnyhill.org

For more information:
Jennifer McGlothlin, Director of Religious Education
(412) 561-6277
dre@sunnyhill.org

Nursery Handbook for Parents and Caregivers

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Welcome to the Nursery
At the Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills (UUCSH)

As Unitarian Universalists, we adhere to the Seven Principles:

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.

It is in the spirit of these Seven Principles that UUCSH developed this handbook for parents and for caregivers (paid and volunteer) who work with our youngest children in the nursery. Our goal is to provide a clean, safe, and nurturing environment for the children who visit our nursery.

Handbook Agreement for Parents

Each time you sign your child into the nursery, you are agreeing to abide by the policies and procedures outlined in the *Nursery Handbook for Parents and Caregivers*. If you have any questions or concerns about anything included in this handbook, please let us know so we can consider your views on the policies outlined. UUCSH will revise the handbook periodically to reflect new childcare needs at the church. After each revision, UUCSH will make an electronic available on the church website. Parents can request a printed copy directly from the Director of Religious Education or the Church Administrator.

Who Can Visit the Nursery?

The nursery is for babies who are crawling and toddlers through age four.

- Infants should remain with parents during the service. Parents can sit with fussy babies in the crying room on the second floor and still hear the service.
- Once a child reaches age four, the child will join the PreK-3rd grade RE class.
- After a child has visited the nursery four times, parents are asked to complete a RE registration form.

Parent Responsibilities when Bringing a Child to the Nursery

- Sign in your child
- Inform caregivers of any allergies
- Provide your cell phone number on the sign in sheet and make sure it is turned to vibrate when you are in service
- Make sure your diaper bag is labeled and full of necessary items
- Arrive promptly to pick up your child and sign them out
- Remain on church premises. (At least one parent *must* remain on church premises at all times while a child is in the nursery.)

140610_Religious Education_Nursery Handbook for Parents and Caregivers

Parents are welcome to stay to help their child adjust to the nursery. If a child cries more than ten minutes, a caregiver will contact parents and ask them to come to the nursery.

Nursery Hours

- The nursery is available year round and opens fifteen minutes before each service. (Service times do change throughout the year. Check the church calendar on the website for service times.)
- The nursery remains open during LifeCraft programming.
- The nursery closes promptly after the second service.

Nursery Basics

UUCSH takes the care of our babies and children seriously. We staff our nursery with two paid caregivers. Our lead caregiver must have been affiliated with UUCSH for at least six months before application can be made for a paid nursery position. Nursery caregivers, like our RE teachers, complete an application and screening form, sign a code of ethics, sign a teaching agreement, and pass a background check (please see appendix for sample documents).

Our goal is a ratio of one caregiver for every five children. If the number of children exceeds ten, we will ask a parent volunteer to assist the two paid caregivers. In the event that a paid caregiver is not available, a volunteer may step in to help. The volunteer is often the parent of one of the children in the nursery. If we cannot provide two caregivers (paid or volunteer), then we will close the nursery.

Supplies Provided by Parents

A bag labeled with your child's name that includes these items:

- Sufficient supply of diapers
- Wipes
- Bottle or sippy cup
- Change of clothes

Health and Safety

Illness. In the best interest of your child and in consideration of other children in the nursery, please keep your child home if any of these symptoms are present: green or yellow nasal discharge, temperature over 100 degrees, diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat, ear ache, unexplained rash, open sores, pink eye, drainage from eyes or ears, or any other sign of illness.

Hygiene. We strive to maintain a clean, healthy environment in our nursery. Caregivers must wash hands before beginning childcare, and hand sanitizer is readily available. Caregivers use non-latex, non-powdered gloves to change diapers, and caregivers wash their hands after every diaper change. We try to change diapers as necessary, if parents have provided all supplies. Either the Director of Religious Education or a caregiver brings the child to the first floor changing table in the bathroom. If this situation leaves only one caregiver in the nursery, this caregiver is 100% concerned with the

safety and security of the remaining children in the nursery. We try to avoid this situation at all costs.

Safety. UUCSH strives to maintain a safe environment in the nursery. Our goal is for every caregiver to be infant/child CPR certified. Currently, both the Director of Religious Education and the lead nursery caregiver are certified in infant/child CPR through MRTSA (Medical Rescue Team South Authority).

Child Incident Report

If an injury in the nursery results in a bump, bruise, or requires a band-aid, the caregiver will issue a Child Injury Report. One copy of the report goes to the parent of the injured child, and one copy remains on file in the church office. Parents—please let the caregiver know of a pre-existing injury (bump, bruise, cut, etc.).

Dietary Restrictions, Allergies, and Snacks

A small snack usually is provided to the nursery caregivers for distribution to the children. A typical snack is goldfish or animal crackers or Cheerios. Parents—please tell the nursery caregivers if your child has dietary restrictions (vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free) or has a food allergy. Parents are welcome to pack a light, non-perishable, non-messy approved snack for their child. Water may also be provided.

Responsibilities of Paid Nursery Caregivers

Arrival and Check In:

- Arrive by 8:30 a.m. and sign in with the Director of Religious Education (DRE)
- Wash hands
- Check nursery for safety and cleanliness
- Check for snack and snack supplies
- Wear a name tag so parents know who you are
- Greet parents and children as they arrive (learn children's names)
- Make sure every child is signed in by a parent
- Inquire about pre-existing injuries such as bumps, bruises, cuts, etc.
- Inquire about dietary restrictions and allergies

Nursery Care:

- Calmly contact parents if a child is injured (bump, bruise, cut, etc.), becomes ill, or becomes inconsolable (cries non-stop for ten minutes). First, send a text message to the parents. If the parents do not respond, locate the parents in the service and ask them to accompany you to the nursery. Keep interruptions to the service to a minimum, but remember that child safety comes first.
- A first aid kit is provided for treating minor injuries
- In the event of an injury, fill out an incident report, and contact the DRE
- Change diapers and supervise potty visits as necessary. While one caregiver is changing a diaper or accompanying a child to the potty, the other caregiver has 100% responsibility for the remaining children in the nursery.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills (UUCSH), as a spiritual community, believes that the safety and well being of our members and friends, both children and adults, is paramount to everything that we do and stand for as a liberal religious community. As stated in our first principle, “the inherent worth and dignity of every person,” we take the responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all very seriously, and to this end have established this policy for our congregation.

UUCSH strives to be an inclusive community, affirming our congregants’ varied beliefs, opinions, and life experiences. However, concern for the safety and well being of the congregation, as a whole must take priority over the privileges and inclusion of any individual.

Right relations with and openness to a wide variety of individuals are two of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our denomination’s purpose and principles. We believe, however, that our congregation must maintain a secure environment where right relations can flourish. Behavior that compromises our ability to fulfill our ministry and undermines our sense of community cannot be tolerated. When any person’s physical and/or emotional well being, safety, or freedom to safely express her or his beliefs or opinions is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly.

There are three main components of this policy:

- First is our commitment to protect the most vulnerable among us, namely our children. The reality and prevalence of child abuse and neglect in our society is such that as a liberal religious community, we must be open to discuss, support and ultimately prevent such acts from occurring within our congregation.
- Second, the policy will outline how the Toward a Safe Congregation Team (TSCT) will educate adults, youth and children in the congregation about these issues, and will provide guidelines for promoting a healthy and safe physical, spiritual, emotional and sexual environment.
- Third, this policy will provide clear definitions for a wide range of inappropriate behavior, including but not limited to harassment, disruptive behaviors, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The policy will also outline steps that will be taken, using the newly formed Toward a Safe Congregation Team (TSCT) to respond appropriately to any untoward event. The TSCT, each member appointed, will include a chairperson and two to three members of the congregation. The TSCT, along with the minister, DRE, and board president, will serve to handle conflicts and disruptive behavior, investigate allegations of misconduct or actions against children and youths, and will make recommendations to the Board of Trustees as needed.

UUCSH Toward a Safe Congregation Policy: Procedures and Guidelines

I. RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND SUPERVISION OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

A. Selection and Screening of Staff and Volunteers: The UUCSH will carefully screen all applicants for paid positions. The UUCSH will require Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearances, Pennsylvania Criminal Record Checks, and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Criminal Background Checks, which applicants must complete, sign and submit as a condition of employment or appointment, both for initial hire and ongoing work. During the recruitment process, which is conducted for each position by the immediate supervisor or supervising committee, additional screening inquiries will be made. Paid or volunteer staff known to have criminal charges pending or who have been convicted of or pled guilty to any sexual or physical abuse or assault charge will not be allowed to work with children or

youth. For any applicants under the age of 14, the parent or guardian must also sign each of the forms described below.

The three documents are as follows, copies of which are found in the Appendix of this policy (Appendices 1-3):

1. Volunteer Application and Screening Form
2. UUCSH Code of Ethics Form
3. Reference Form (two per applicant)

These documents will be used for the Minister, Director of Religious Education (DRE), church staff, paid nursery staff (over 14 years of age), Youth Group Advisors, including OWL and COA teachers and mentors, and members of the TSCT. Starting in September 2015, RE teachers will be required to complete clearances including the Pennsylvania Criminal Records Request and Pennsylvania Child Abuse checks. For those volunteers who have not lived in Pennsylvania for 10 years or more, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Criminal Background Check will also be required. In addition to the documentation stated above, candidates must attend teacher/mentor workshops as provided by the DRE and RE committee on related congregational policies and procedures. Youth group leaders must be at least 25 years of age.

B. Screening Process and Documentation: The Search Committee and/or the DRE shall be responsible for overseeing completion of the appropriate paperwork and for checking references. The immediate supervisor and/or the DRE shall follow up to ensure that the reference checks have been completed and submitted appropriately. If the DRE or Search Committee does not know the applicant, confirmation of identity will be requested.

For all RE-related positions, including teachers, advisors and mentors, the applicant shall have been a congregant for at least **six** months, or have been a member of another Unitarian Universalist Congregation and be able to supply two non-familial references to the Religious Education Committee (RE Committee) and DRE. References must include the name, phone number and address of the reference, type and duration of the relationship, and a general character overview, including the person's ability to work with children/youth.

All new RE related volunteers must submit the necessary clearances to the DRE before being considered for a volunteer position. The DRE will keep records of the screening and related forms in a confidential file. Access to such information will be limited to the Personnel Committee, Minister, DRE, and Toward a Safe Congregation Committee as necessary. The Pennsylvania Child Abuse Clearance, Pennsylvania Criminal Record Check, and FBI fingerprint clearance must be current and updated as required per Pennsylvania law and must be recorded with the UUCSH. The UUCSH also requires the Code of Ethics form to be signed yearly.

The Toward a Safe Congregation Team will complete an annual review of the state's known sex offender list (<http://www.parneganslaw.state.pa.us/Main.aspx>), and check it against the UUCSH mailing list. If any names appear on both, they will be brought to the attention of the SRT for investigation, following the guidelines in Section nine of this policy.

This policy encourages any member of the UUCSH who has been convicted of, or is under indictment for, or has been involved in any sexual misconduct involving a child, or child abuse, to make him/herself known to the Minister, Director of Religious Education, or President of the Board of Trustees. Other members, or friends, who become aware of such information, should report this to the minister, Director

Reflection

These examples were created early in my career, yet they are at the forefront of how I continue to lead in my congregation. Not only do I rely on these documents regularly when training new employees and educating volunteers, but I also must hold myself to the policies

themselves - maintaining clearances for over 100 volunteers and staff is no easy task! These documents will continue to be amended and adjusted to accommodate our ever-changing world. Policies are only effective if they are followed and if they meet the needs of the program they are written for. Creating the initial nursery document and then working alongside the Sunnyhill Board of Trustees to draft the Toward a Safe Congregation Policy helped me learn how to function as a congregational leader and part of a team. These documents will continue to evolve as we move into the future.

Sunnyhill Connects Newsletter

As COVID-19 shut our doors physically, we sought ways to open them virtually and share the information with our congregation. What started as a Friday Covid Guideline update quickly turned into an additional newsletter that listed Service and RE-specific updates (we already have a regular weekly newsletter published on Wednesdays for church news and events).

I took the lead on creating this communication with congregants, as I jumped in to help with several tech-related duties at the beginning of the pandemic, including sharing updates on social media and our church website, managing virtual coffee and conversation, annual meetings, elections, and sharing circles (all in addition to moving to virtual religious education programming).

The following example is from only a few weeks after the nationwide shutdown and showcases the various virtual programs offered at the time. I created the newsletter itself, including copy and graphics. The “Sunnyhill Connects” newsletter, as it evolved to being called after we settled into “Covid times”, was published from April through September 2020. By September of that year, we determined that we were not returning to in-person programming any time soon, so we returned to the Wednesday-only newsletter with all of the information needed (with a greater emphasis on the service and connection links).

Full Newsletter:

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Sunnyhill-COVID-19-Updates.html?soid=1103081188067&aid=DkZZHiSjksY>



Sunnyhill COVID-19 Updates

Reminder:
Sunday Morning Programming will be *online* only until further notice.

SERVICE ON SUNDAY



One of the central messages of Easter is re-birth, rising even from death itself to transform into something new. In a time of quarantine, death and disease, what does it mean to rise together? And how can we re-imagine and re-experience hope and new life in the midst of despair and suffering?

This Service will be streamed via [Facebook Live](#) and uploaded [here](#).

Order of Service
[Sunnyhill Facebook Page](#)
[Give Online](#)
[Submit a Joy/Sorrow](#)

(submit by end of day on Friday for Sunday inclusion)



Sunday Morning RE will take place at 11:30 am via [Zoom](#) and will include a Virtual Egg Hunt! If your family is not able to join us on Sunday morning, the Egg Hunt can be found [here](#).

Sunnyhill is also participating in a nationwide "UU Egg Hunt" that brings you and your family, virtually, to congregations all over the country via church websites. The details can be found here: [UU Virtual Easter Egg Hunt 2020](#)

Zoom Weekly Check-ins

Youth Group: Thursday Evening at 7:30 pm

Middle School: Wednesday Evening at 6:00 pm, led by Christi Kreg

RE Parent Check In: Tuesday at 7pm via [Zoom](#)

Family Talent Show!

Had a spring recital or concert get cancelled? Have a song you and your children have been working on that you want to share with friends? Have a kiddo that needs to focus on something other than school for a little while?

Fill these needs and more by participating or attending our first annual virtual Family Talent Show on April 18 at 7pm! Please use the link below to sign up, virtual "auditions" will take place on the Thursday and Friday before the event. Sign up [here](#) to participate or attend!

Visit [RE @ Home](#) for lesson plans, family activities, and resources!

STAYING CONNECTED

Zoom Check In

There will be a Sunnyhill Member/Friend Check-In via Zoom **today** at 2:00 pm. Join [here](#).

Coffee & Conversation

All are welcome to join for a virtual "Coffee & Conversation" via [Zoom](#) on Sunday at 11:00.

Meditation

All are welcome for meditation led by Diane Rusch Tuesday mornings, starting at 9:30. We meditate for half an hour, then talk about the experience for half an hour. Contact [Dean Hazelton](#) for details.

APRIL 20	Coffee & Conversation Sunday, 11 am	Game Night Saturday, April 4 at 7pm	Religious Education Sunday, 11:30 am
	Meditation Tuesday, 9 am	Children's Talent Show Saturday, April 18 7pm	Parent Check In Tuesdays, 7:00 pm
	Check In Friday, 2 pm		High School Youth Group Thursdays, 7:30 pm
	<i>connect</i>	<i>gather</i>	<i>learn</i>
	www.sunnyhill.org		SUNNYHILL ONLINE <i>together, apart.</i>

Reflection

This sample showcases my role as a part of our staff team. Most of our congregations function with a small crew of paid individuals (mostly part-time) and dedicated volunteers. Being part of a team requires cooperation and collaboration. The COVID-19 pandemic forced us all to rapidly learn new skills to meet the needs of our faith communities. As a leader in our congregation and among our staff, it is necessary to know when to *step up* and when to *step back*, and in times of crisis these moments are even more clear. I was able to step up as part of our staff team to help with communications and tech support, which I continue with today as we move our congregational mission forward.

Lenses

Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism and Technology

The use of technology is paramount in this particular competency and is showcased in the samples above, most notably in the newsletter. Much of an ARAOMC lens is also utilized, though it is often “behind the scenes”. One particular example is working to make our website, communications, and database as screen reader-friendly as possible. This is an area that I am always trying to learn more about and is an opportunity for growth in the future. Many of the methods that our congregation currently utilizes are not inherently screen reader-friendly. For example, when we share our live-streamed service on Facebook and Youtube an individual that is visually impaired can hear the service but does not have access to the full order of service - including names, titles, hymn lyrics, and more. These items are often on the screen, via an introduction slide, but are not audible. Facebook can turn on closed captioning, but that does not solve the issue for visually impaired individuals. While we have not encountered a perfect solution to this issue, I ensure that we have a screen reader-friendly order of service posted via a link with the information for each service before the Sunday service. Another issue I have encountered is that our church database, Breeze, utilizes “pop-ups” for many of its functions, which are not screen reader-friendly. I have worked one-on-one to navigate our church database with those in our congregation that utilize screen readers. I have also advocated to Breeze that the database, as is, is not fully accessible and have pleaded for updates, which unfortunately have not happened. I will continue to try until we find a fully accessible database that will suit the needs of our congregation. Working to make our communications and database accessible is just a small way that I am working to be in a right relationship with our congregation and serve our staff team.

Sexual Health

Summary

Personal sexual health and knowledge is a lifelong challenge that is never complete. Our opinions and understandings in this area must grow as we continue to learn more. As discussed in the article “Learning Types and Their Needs” by Daniel Harper from Essex Conversations: Visions for Lifespan Religious Education, individuals might be at different stages of Unitarian Universalist Identity and Faith Development based on their personal experience and time spent in a congregation. As new members just finding Unitarian Universalism may be at a more novice position than youth who have grown up as UUs, knowledge about sexual diversity is similar. Our young people in our movement have been, and continue to be, our guiding light as we move forward in new understandings of sexual health today and into the future. We need to learn from the youth in our movement and lead by their example, particularly in their level of understanding in the realm of gender identity and expression. I hope to continue my educational journey to shape our Religious Education program and our congregation to be more inclusive, welcoming, and accepting of all.

The Our Whole Lives (OWL) program is one of the most impactful programs offered to children, youth, and their families in our churches. I often tell caregivers that it can change and save lives, and I deeply believe that. It is the program that I wish I was offered as a young person, and that I am committed to bringing to not only the children and youth of our congregation but also to my children.

To be competent in sexual health as a religious educator means to continue to be open to learning and growing about the human mind and body as it relates to relationships, intimacy, identity, and more. As Unitarian Universalists, we have a responsibility to create an environment where misconduct is not tolerated, knowledge is championed, and young people are empowered to make healthy decisions for themselves. By creating, implementing, and upholding safety standards and sharing those policies widely and openly, our congregation has created an environment of responsible and healthy relationships for all.

Formation

Structured Learning

- Our Whole Lives 7-9 Grade Training, Led by Tina Lesley-Fox and Robin Slaw
 - UUCSH, Pittsburgh, 2018
- “Safer Congregations”, Led by Rev. Debra Haffner
 - General Assembly Workshop, Louisville KY, 2013

RE Based Professional Work/ Leadership Experience

- Co-Led Parents as Sexuality Educators

- 8 sessions, 2022
- Created an environment that encourages positive gender expression in our congregation (ongoing)
- Helped to create personal care baskets in the church restrooms (2019)
- Hosted OWL Facilitator Training in 2018 and 2019 at UUCSH
- Organized volunteers, registration, and logistics for OWL courses (2012-2022)
- Assembled resources to offer a comprehensive RE lesson on Transgender Visibility Day (2019)

Life Experiences

- Partner to my husband of 12 years and parent to two children ages 12 and 9
- Therapy to work through personal experiences of sexual assault and trauma (2018-present)

Application and Integration

Culture of Inclusivity

Children and adults should feel “seen” and welcomed in our congregations and be able to bring their full selves to faith communities. I have added many resources to our bookshelves and images to our physical space to remind youth that they are worthy. I led the charge for increased pronoun visibility in our congregation and have researched and brought in various tools to help facilitate that goal. The included images show posters and signs throughout our building, books that are available in our library (and at times, on display), and nametag examples. There is also a small excerpt from a board report, which shares about Transgender Visibility Day.



DRE Board Report for April 2019

Submitted: March 29, 2019

- I have worked closely with Christi Kreg (Sunnyhill's new chair of the LGBTQ Justice / Interweave) team and RE Parent to create RE lessons for the March 31 Transgender Day of Visibility. In addition to lesson plans for the classes, we have added several resources to the RE library and a poster about this issue and have rededicated our efforts to promote pronouns on name tags. Sunnyhill classrooms seek to be welcoming to all children and we hope that the added resources will help!

Reflection

Creating a “culture of inclusivity” can not be completed and checked off a list. While the above examples are helpful, they are just the beginning. I continue seeking personal growth and knowledge regarding diversity and inclusion personally and professionally and bring back that knowledge to the RE program and the congregation as a whole. Racial justice, LGBTQIA+ justice, and other social justice endeavors are lifelong journeys that require consistent attention and dedication.

Personal Care Baskets

In 2019 the 7-9 Grade OWL Students learned about contraceptives and asked where they could find them at our congregation. At that time, the answer was “in Jen’s office”, where there was just a small handful of condoms in a bag for OWL lessons. The youth in the class were not satisfied with that answer and got to work, advocating for a more prominent location for contraceptives.

These conversations led to many more questions and discussions (Who would pay for them? Where should they go? Should we provide them?) What started as “Maybe a small jar in the youth group?” ended with a discreet but complete “Personal Care Baskets” in each restroom and a relationship with the local health department. This relationship has been ongoing and the baskets are still maintained and utilized today. The language used on the materials and communications relating to these baskets was a learning process in itself, as well as exactly what products to include. By using inclusive terms, like personal care and menstrual health, including the same products in each restroom, and including internal and external condoms and dental dams, we created a resource that was inclusive of all genders and a learning tool for all. The included images show how a piece of a board report and an image of one of the baskets.

DRE Board Report for April 2019

Submitted: March 29, 2019

This Month

- Both sessions of OWL are now in full swing, with the 7-9 Grade wrapping up in several weeks. On March 24 they learned about contraceptives, which prompted several developments, including Personal Care baskets in Sunnyhill restrooms (which include prophylactics and menstrual products) and a relationship with the Allegheny County Health Department. UUCSH is now recognized as a “Condom Distribution Partner” of the ACDC and can obtain free contraceptives as needed (up to 1000 pieces per month). I appreciate the work of Tanya Broaded and Mary Alice Chaffin, who started the conversation and created the baskets.



Personal Care Baskets

Reflection

The personal care baskets, when introduced, were not welcomed by all in the congregation. Now that they have been in place for several years, the congregation has embraced them. One key factor that contributed to our success was the relationship with the local health department, which we have continued to maintain for this and new educational opportunities.

“Love Makes a Family” Children’s Activity

February 7, 2015

First Saturday
Children’s Activities
Theme: Love
4:30-5:45

Materials needed:

- Chalice (in tall oak cabinet in the main room downstairs, with battery operated candle. If using big red one, flip it upside down to turn it on or off).
- Crayons, markers (found in RE Supply Closet, in the Pumpkin Room)
- Construction Paper (found in RE Supply Closet, in the Pumpkin Room)

Light the Chalice

We light this Chalice because we are Unitarian Universalists. The Church of the open mind, loving heart, and helping hands. Together we care for our earth and work for friendship and peace in our world.

Joys and Concerns

Invite the children to share their joys and concerns around the circle. I would also be helpful for them to introduce themselves.

Lessons:

Read “The Family Book”

Read “And Tango Makes Three”

Open up discussions about family.

Activity: “Love makes a family”

Hand out construction paper and coloring supplies. Prompt the kids to draw a picture of their family and write at the top “Love makes a family”.

Additional Activity (if time permits):

“Your Sunnyhill Family”

Say something like: *We talked about how love makes a family. Family can include more than just the family that you live with or are related to you. I want you to think about your Sunnyhill family too! Look around at your friends here in this class, or in your normal Sunday RE class, they care about you too. At this time we will draw a picture of your “Sunnyhill Family”. Pass around additional paper.*

Additional Activity 2 (if time permits):

“Valentines”

Say something like: *It is important to tell the people we love that they are important and they matter to us. Make a Valentine for someone either in your home family or Sunnyhill family that you love or care about. Make sure to bring it with you and give it them!*

Reflection

The role of the religious educator in the congregation is to create policies, provide resources, and plan lessons for children and youth that match the program goals. Creating an environment where children and youth are welcome to bring their whole selves is very important to me - particularly in our current climate of conflict, pain, hate, and vitriol. For many folks in our congregation, this may be the one place where they can feel welcome to be themselves. I seek to uphold that feeling of welcome and inclusivity as paramount in our program and church. The above lesson was created for a small group of children during a “Second Saturday” event in 2015. These small events brought congregants together on a Saturday evening for a short lesson together for all ages before splitting into small groups and ending with a potluck meal. This example showcases that even a “light” and “fun” lesson for young children could convey the underlying lesson - that you are welcome and valued. This lesson also relates to sexual health because it upholds that love is the center of a family- and that families come in different shapes, sizes, colors, and individuals.

Lenses

Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism

As showcased in the above examples, awareness of gender identity has been a priority in our Religious Education program for some time. It is my responsibility to create a program that values all individuals and that all children feel included, valued, and worthy of love. I want all children to have a home in our congregation - even if the rest of the world tells them they do not deserve one. Creating this welcoming environment starts at the top. It is up to the church leadership to work together to instill these values in everything we do. Throughout America, LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersexual, Asexual, and others) individuals and students are denied rights and respect. By creating an environment that champions the value of inherent worth and dignity of all individuals, we are telling a simple message - you matter.

Technology

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Religious Educators were asked to cease offering Our Whole Lives programming unless they could be held (safely) in person. We heeded that request and offered “Parents as Sexuality Educators,” an entirely Zoom-based small group offering for parents and caregivers. This program, which I co-led for our church, was created by UU Religious Educators. While not designed as an online course, it adapted well to this setting and included TED Talks, website resources, and activities.

In addition to this online small group offering, I brought the process for keeping children safe in our congregations to our website to make it as accessible as possible. I can direct individuals to the (virtual) locations to acquire needed clearances and view our safe congregation policies. These are just small examples on how I have utilized technology to further sexual health initiatives in our congregation.

Six Sources of UU Inspiration

Summary

Some of my earliest memories are from memorizing the Apostle and Nicene Creeds in my Catholic elementary school. I remember preparing for my first Holy Communion by confessing my sins to Father Vallone at St. Mary of the Mount for the first time. I recall asking my teachers questions like “Who made God?”, “Why do bad things happen to good people?”, “What happens if a baby dies before they are baptized... do they make it into heaven? ...And What about the people who just haven’t heard about Jesus? Do they go to Hell automatically?”. My incessant questions were treated as a nuisance - and I recall being told to not ask those kinds of questions.

In my early teens, I moved with my mother to South Carolina, where my Catholic upbringing was often questioned by friends and their families. I remember being asked what faith tradition I belonged to, and after responding, “Catholic,” the next question would be “But are you Christian?”. These experiences of growing up Catholic and friends trying to “save” me from eternal damnation when growing up Catholic wasn’t enough, left a lasting impact on my theology, interests, and later educational pursuits.

As a college sophomore, beginning to get into the courses for my declared education major, I found myself needing more to fill my mind than what I was learning. The “Introduction to World Religions” class I took for a semester as an elective stuck with me - and brought the academic study of religion into my mind like a “one-hit wonder” earworm. I could not shake it from my brain. After the first week of classes that sophomore year, I took a leap of faith. I went with my heart and changed my major to religious studies. The response I got from family members was that I was making a huge mistake and that I would never find a job with a degree like “religious studies.”

A class assignment in “Religions in America” brought me to the local Unitarian Church in Charleston. While sitting inside the wooden pews in that beautiful, historic building, I felt something that I had never felt before, the feeling of “home” in a faith community. I was in a place where questions were encouraged, minds were open, and no one thought I was destined for hell. The more I learned about Unitarian Universalism, the more I heard a message of welcome, compassion, understanding, and love.

My personal experiences with various sects of the Christian tradition, and later my education, have instilled in me a desire to learn more and be engaged with the learning of others. An individual’s beliefs about the world, the meaning of life, and what comes next impact personal decisions, just as they influence a culture’s values and a government’s laws. Learning the world religions leads to understanding, compassion, and empathy. One of my missions as a Unitarian Universalist religious educator is to share knowledge of the world religions to help foster understanding and compassion across cultures and borders.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I draw inspiration from our Six Sources, the poetry of Rupi Kaur, the fiction of Octavia Butler, the harmonies of Fleet Foxes, the beatitudes of Jesus, the detachment taught by the Buddha, the warmth of the sun on my skin, and the embrace of my grandmother.

Formation

Structured Learning

- Bachelor of Arts, Religious Studies, 2009
 - College of Charleston, Charleston SC
 - Courses taken include Introduction to World Religions, Value and Tradition in Asian Civilizations, The Christian Tradition, The New Testament: History and Interpretation, The Hebrew Bible: History and Interpretation, Introduction to Introduction to Philosophy: Beliefs and Values, Religion in America, Religion and Film, New Religious Movements, Religious Tradition and Scientific Inquiry, Women and Religion, Comparative Religious Ethics, Approaches to Religion, Evil and Suffering, Theories in the Study of Religions, Philosophy: Beliefs and Values, The Buddhist Tradition, Shamanism, Senior Seminar: Prophets & Messiahs
 - Outstanding Student of Religious Studies, 2009
 - Humanities and Social Sciences Scholar Award, 2009

RE Based Professional Work/ Leadership Experience

- Guided Coming of Age Classes as they explored their own beliefs while exploring world religions, including visits to other places of worship with them, including the Pittsburgh Islamic Center, the Sri Venkateswara Temple (Hindu, Venkateswara), and Prabhupada's Palace of Gold (Hare Krishna)
 - 2012-Present

Life Experiences

- Attended Catholic Elementary School, and "CCD" (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) classes through middle school
- After moving to South Carolina, attended various places of worship with friends, including Southern Baptist and Non-Denominational Christian churches as well as events focused on evangelism, including a visit to a "Judgment House" in High School and "Campus Crusade for Christ" during Freshman year of college. These experiences had a profound impact on my theology as well as helped me to understand the varieties of religious experiences in the United States
- During my time at the College of Charleston, I did more in-depth research for the aforementioned classes in Pentecostalism and the Nation of Islam. It was through a research assignment that I found Unitarian Universalism

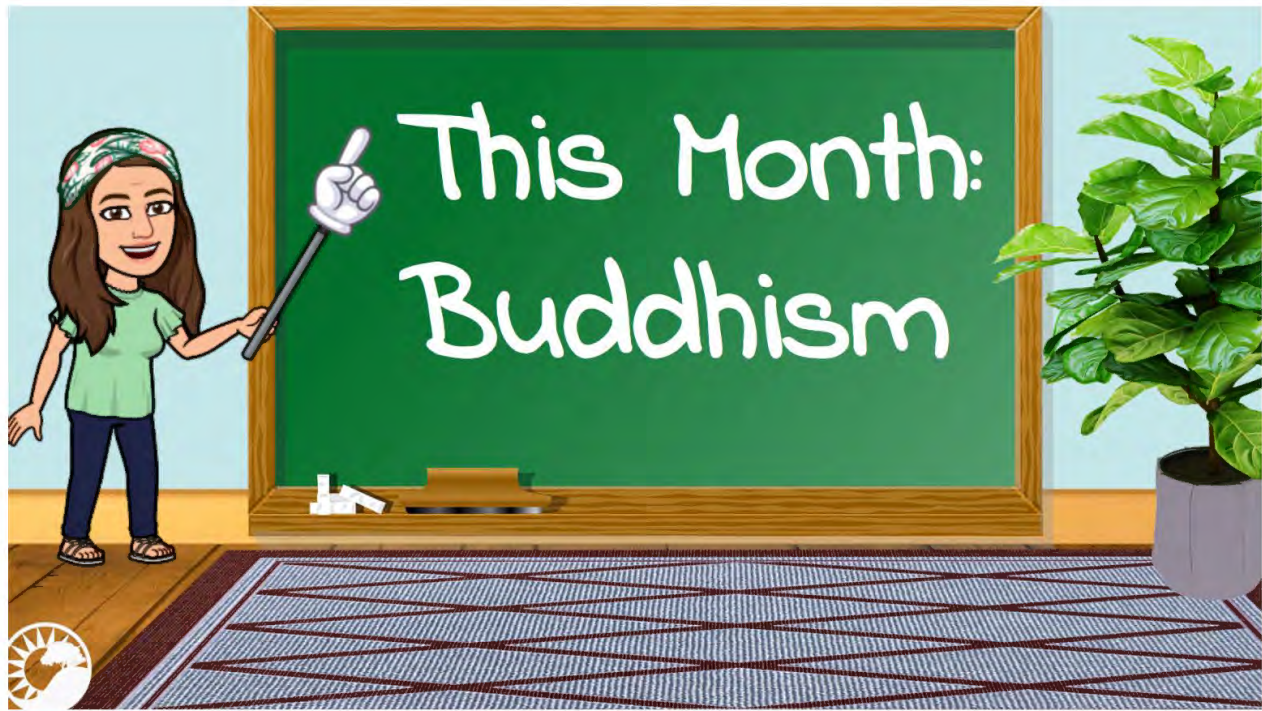
Application and Integration

Online World Religions Class for Middle School

During the 2020-2021 church year when our buildings shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I taught a class for 6-8 graders utilizing the Soul Matters Crossing Paths curriculum. I adapted the lessons to meet the needs of our middle school youth learning virtually. I added fun graphics and videos to keep our classes interesting since many children were engaged in virtual learning during their school day. In addition to these changes, I created content to share additional information when there were gaps in the provided lessons.

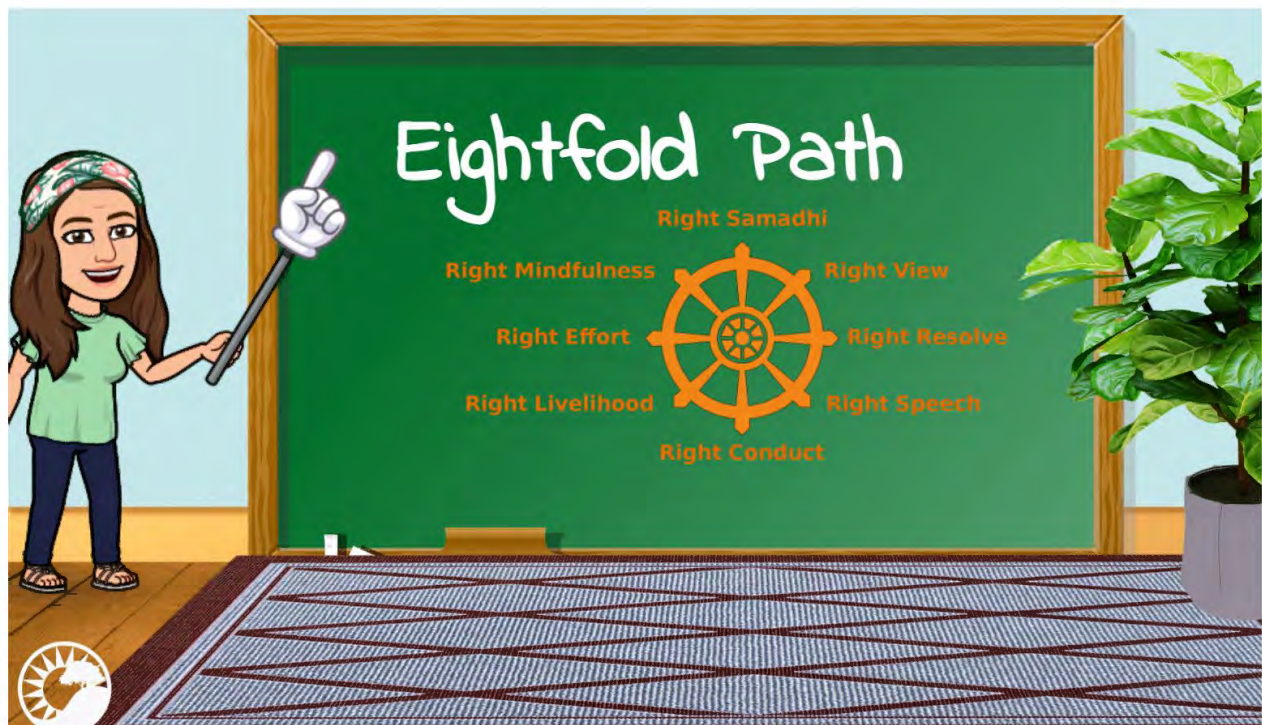
The featured example shows one of two lessons on Buddhism. One piece of knowledge that I wanted the children to keep with them is that Buddhism is not a monolith as is thought about in the West and that for many, it is absolutely a religion, not just a philosophy. Part of our duty in sharing religious traditions that are not our own is to do so accurately and not repeat false stereotypes. As Unitarian Universalists, we are inspired by the “wisdom of world religions” but we also have to be mindful when engaging with religious beliefs and practices outside of our traditions. There is a fine line between appreciating and appropriating and trying to impart an understanding of the world religions, but not stereotyping is so important. This example showcases how I attempted to share that knowledge while making the lesson fun and engaging.





Theravada Buddhism- The School of the Elders

- the oldest
- draws its practices from the earliest Buddhist teachings
- follows the **Pali** Canon – the oldest recorded teachings of the Buddha
 - teachings are written in the ancient Indian language, Pali. Both Theravada Buddhism and Hinduism feature the Pali language.
- the most conservative branch of Buddhism



Pure Land Buddhism

- common to all schools of Pure Land is the recitation of the name of Amitabha Buddha
- followers believe that achieving the liberation of nirvana through a life of monastic austerity is very difficult for most people
- they believe that the ideal is a rebirth in a **Pure Land**, where nothing can interfere with the devoted practice of the Buddha's teaching
- By the grace of Amitabha's compassion, the people reborn in a Pure Land find themselves only a short step from Nirvana

Pure Land Buddhism

- focuses on the veneration of **Amitābha** Buddha, a celestial buddha representing pure perception and a deep awareness of emptiness
- developed out of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition
 - while Mahayana believes that its goal is liberation into Nirvana, Pure Land sees its goal as a rebirth into "Pure Land" from which Nirvana is but a short step away



Reflection

The Covid19 Pandemic brought many challenges and struggles, but it also gave small opportunities to offer additional classes for children and youth. While I would love more time for classroom instruction with RE students, my role on Sunday mornings is more focused on managing volunteers and participating in worship. Offering the online world religions class was such an enjoyable part of the time in lockdown. As we moved back into in-person learning, I tried to carve out more opportunities for me to be in the classroom and build stronger relationships with the students, which has been very positive.

Connecting Time for All Ages and RE Classes with Sermons

During COVID-19 when all programming was in a constant state of flux, I adapted the UUCSH lessons and stories to be accessible either online or in person and designed them with that Sunday's sermon in mind. I wanted to create a connection between Sunnyhill, the lessons, the stories, the Sermons, and the families present (virtually or in person). This example shows the Time for All Ages I shared with the congregation (Inspired by one created by Religious Educator Elisabeth Hammerberg.)

As Unitarian Universalists, we are not given specific instructions of who to pray to, or how to pray. For me- prayer looks like mindfulness and feels like gratitude. Prayer is important to me because it takes me to a place where I can feel something bigger than myself. I don't always know what to call that thing, sometimes it feels like love.

Today in RE we would have been exploring spiritual practices including meditation, yoga, and mandala making- each of which can be a prayer-full practice if you choose it to be. As Unitarian Universalists we have a chance to find what is true and meaningful to us as individuals which I think is a pretty powerful and special thing. Due to the service being moved to online only- now you get to do these activities together as a family, if you wish! The link to find the activities can be found on the Sunnyhill website in the body of the order of service and will be posted in the comment on facebook. I hope you explore these practices together. See you next week!

RE 10/3 "How to Pray" Online Version

Today's Core Messages

There are many different ways to connect with something bigger than ourselves (which some may call God, Allah, Brahman, Nature, Spirit). Taking time out for spiritual practice is a way to stay grounded in balance with our whole selves.

Applicable Principles or Sources in the Lesson

1st Source: 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

Simpler Version: the sense of wonder we all share

3rd Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations

Simpler Version: We believe that we should accept one another and keep learning together.

Chalice Lighting (We are Unitarian Universalists, church of the open mind, loving heart, and helping hands. Together we care for our earth, and work for peace and friendship in our world.

Joys and Sorrows

Meditation

We ultimately pivoted to online worship that morning, and this was the religious education lesson I shared with the families to utilize at home. When sharing lesson plans with volunteers, I have incorporated UU Principles and Sources as a way to remind/encourage them to be treating the time teaching (in-person) or with their children (when the service is virtual) as a spiritual practice for themselves as well.

<https://www.kidsyogastories.com/autumn-yoga/>

Activity 2: Nature Mandalas

1. Pick a peaceful place out in nature to create your nature mandala. Then, you will need to gather some organic materials around you to use. Things like twigs, leaves, grasses, flowers, berries, pinecones, and acorns work really well.

2. To create your nature mandala, place a meaningful item in the center. Then start placing other items you gathered near the center first and continue moving outward from the center until you've created a circular design.

3. Continue making patterns until your items are used up and your nature mandala looks complete. And remember, you can create it however you like! You could use bright colors or muted earth tones. Make it big or small. Make it as simple or complex as you want.

Discussion: We explored three spiritual practices today. Can you tell me what they were? How did you feel after each of them? Which was your favorite? What are other ways that you can feel more connected to your inner self? What are other ways that you can feel more connected to the outer world? Think of some of these options and then try to find an opportunity to do one of them every single day.

Closing: We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Reflection

Theme-based ministry, where there is a thread woven through the lessons of worship, religious education, small groups, music, and more, can impact a congregation and their connections with one another. By bringing these lessons together, we foster communication and a deeper understanding of the messages; I hope we continue to utilize these methods!

Mindfulness when Sharing Traditions

We must practice understanding and mindfulness when sharing stories and traditions outside of the ones we have grown up with or experienced ourselves. This example shows the introduction to a Time for All Ages (TFAA) segment for a service about the Jewish Passover tradition. To prepare for this session, I reached out to various members of the Jewish tradition in our congregation for assistance. While they were each traveling and unable to be present in the service to share this time with me that Sunday, I wanted their input on whether the story about “Dayenu” was appropriate for me (as someone outside of the Jewish tradition) to share and if the song was appropriate for our congregation to be signing. Only after conversations with those from within the Jewish tradition, and several edits, was I prepared to share the story on Sunday morning.

The story that I am going to share with you all today is called “More Than Enough: A Passover Story”. While it does not tell the story of Passover, it tells the story of how a young Jewish family spends their day leading up to, during, and after their Seder meal.

There is one word that you will hear all through the story, and that is “Dayenu”. Dayenu means “It would have been enough”. For over 1000 years Jews have been singing a song with this phrase during Passover. The song tells the story of the Jewish People being saved from slavery, being given the Torah, and so much more as a gift from God. It says that just one of the many gifts they received would have been enough, and yet God kept giving them more. The song is a reminder of the appreciation and gratitude they feel to their Hebrew God, Yahweh. The story I am going to share is simple, but it tells of a family that is so grateful for the little things- the rain, their food, their time together, and their traditions. While I do not personally have a background in the Jewish tradition, it is a reminder for me to find appreciation in the many gifts, including the gift of strength and resiliency like the Jewish people, that I have been granted and be endlessly grateful. While I share this story, I want you to think of the many gifts that you have to be thankful for. One major thing I am grateful for is the wonderful musicians we have among us, and I hope you are too! Ms. Mary will be guiding us through this book with singing Dayenu.

Reflection

This is just one small example of the work required of us as Unitarian Universalist religious educators seeking to share traditions that are outside of our own. We must seek voices from within traditions and do ample research before we attempt to share something that does not belong to us.

Lenses

Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism

The attention to sharing the sources of our faith through an Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism lens is of absolute importance. As Unitarian Universalists, we have confused appreciation with appropriation all too often, but as you learn more - you do better. The questions I ask myself include: "Is this resource/story mine to share? Who does the inclusion of a particular story or tradition serve? Who does it belong to? Who should be telling it? Who does it leave behind?" This is just one of many ways to utilize an ARAOMC lens when considering our Six Sources.

Technology

As showcased in the example about the virtual RE Lessons about world religions, technology brings our world together. Each of our sources - *direct experience with mystery and wonder, words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil, wisdom from the world religions, Jewish and Christian teachings which remind us to love our neighbors, Humanist teachings that ask us to seek reason, and spiritual teachings that invite us to honor the rhythm of nature* - are accessible and readily sharable due to our globalization, social media, and the internet. By tapping into these resources and sharing them, we ground ourselves as religious professionals and our congregations in spirituality - not just on Sunday mornings but throughout the week. Images, music, sacred texts and stories, and meditations are all utilized in our religious education programming (often through the powers of a google search, a computer screen, and speakers!) regularly.

Systems and Conflict

Summary

Conflict is inevitable in any long-term gathering of individuals - whether it be in a family, a workplace, a friend group, or a congregation. Conflict, in itself, is neutral - not a positive or a negative. It is also unavoidable when humans interact with one another in any meaningful way. In my experience, it is not the conflict itself that is the source of many of the struggles that come up in day-to-day life. It is the way conflicts are handled that can have the greatest impact. When issues that arise in our church families are managed directly and professionally, congregant relationships can return to a balanced equilibrium or even grow.

Frequently when a church member is frustrated, dissatisfied, or angry for one reason or another, there are underlying situations or feelings that also need to be addressed. So often, the call for mediation is a pastoral one that requires care and deep listening.

As I have worked through the various “seasons” of church life, I have become more comfortable with the patterns of highs and lows that come along with it. Any time there is a change in the system, there is an opportunity for conflict as individuals regain their balance. As depicted in the [Rollercoaster of Change](#) model (there are many versions, but the one I am referencing was adapted from Ralph G. Hirschowitz by Susan Hassinger, a bishop in the United Methodist denomination), individuals often have an emotional response to a change in a system and it takes time to bring them to a place of moving forward - and each person might be at a different spot on the path to acceptance. As a church staff, we are often the first to learn of the coming change and have longer to process our emotions, so when we present news to the congregation, we must anticipate and empathize with members being at a different spot than where we are. Once again, this often requires a pastoral response, with care and deep listening, and an opportunity for the congregant to feel heard.

As a religious educator working with children and youth, one of my biggest challenges has been working through situations where our young people disagree with decisions made by church staff or elders or worse: when they have been personally harmed by something or someone at our church. While these two types of conflict seem very different, they both can have an impact on the individuals and the church system itself. In both situations, it is vital to lift the concerns of the young people and give them a platform to communicate their concerns, listen, and take appropriate actions based on the situation. There is no one size fits all response to conflict! Particularly when working through conflict with and among children and youth, it is once again vital to bring a spirit of care and deep listening, and recognize that as the DRE (Director of Religious Education) in the congregation, there is a power dynamic at play. We hold a huge amount of power and influence in our congregations. It is imperative to first recognize that that power exists and then utilize it to lift marginalized voices in our congregations, including children and youth.

Formation

Structured Learning

- Administration of Religious Education Renaissance Module
 - Near Youngstown Ohio, February 2013, 15 hours
- Restorative Justice Circles Workshop- Sheila Shuh
 - Ohio Meadville LREDA Retreat, Wheeling WV, February 2019
- LREDA Fall Conference 2017- Modeling of Restorative Practices
- “Intentional Church”- Steven Mead
 - Ohio Meadville LREDA Retreat, Wheeling WV, February 2017 (2 hours)
- “Polarity Management in Congregations”- Jennifer Halperin
 - Ohio Meadville LREDA Retreat, Wheeling WV, February 2017 (2 hours)

RE Based Professional Work/ Leadership Experience

- Working through conflict with consultation from Rev. Sunshine Jeremiah Wolfe and Rev. Elaine Strawn (2017-2019)
- Beloved Conversations Virtual Participant (2020-present)
- Working directly through congregational change, from ministerial and other staff changes, a capital campaign, and a major renovation that pushed us out of our building for one year
- Ohio Meadville LREDA Chapter Involvement (2012-2022)
- Supervision of childcare providers (2012-present)

Life Experiences

- Restaurant Manager, 2009-2012

Application and Integration

Samples 1-2 have been redacted.

RE Space Negotiations

The question of “who gets the space?” tends to show power dynamics at play in any congregation. Whether it's new member classes, choir rehearsals, meditation, adult conversation groups, committee meetings, or rentals, there is a dance that takes place on Sunday mornings and throughout the week at UUCSH. As a church staff, we prioritize the work of the church as the primary function of our space and that includes worship and religious education at the top, followed by church governance, committees, and then other spiritual practices next. There is a delicate balance when two of these primary functions are advocating for their needs, whether it be space, location in the newsletter, or even tabling during a participation fair. One specific conversation that seems to bubble up every few years is the timing and location of RE classes, which in many cases, take place in shared spaces on Sunday

mornings. There have been several occasions when I've had adults eager to start their meeting barging into an ongoing RE class when service happens to end a few minutes early.

I have handled these budding conflicts in direct and indirect ways. I have engaged in conversations directly with the leaders of the group, and individuals, as well as the teachers so that there is a clear timeframe for when RE ends and the next round of programming can begin. Indirectly, I have written newsletter articles, posted signs on the doors indicating the start and end times, and put clocks in the rooms. I have advocated for our children and youth to have uninterrupted time in the classrooms, which for that one hour, is *their* space. Our congregation often elevates the importance of RE; it is my role to advocate for the needs of the program.

Reflection

Space negotiations will never be fully resolved and tend to pop up perennially. When handling conflict, it is important to reflect on what (if any) underlying concerns might be under the surface. There are times when it's not space that is the actual problem, but underlying issues on power dynamics, resource hoarding, and more. Approaching conflict from a systems perspective is necessary, as it is to keep personal boundaries to have the ability to self-differentiate.

Lenses

Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism

I have eagerly participated in the Beloved Conversations (Virtual) program since the fall of 2020 with a small group of Sunnyhill members. One of the core learnings in both the "Within" and "Among" sessions is learning about one's personal relationship with conflict as well as a congregation conflict. What I have learned through this program is that I naturally prefer to avoid conflict and that our congregation is quite similar. Often both the congregation and I tend to "keep the peace", and the result has been to maintain the status quo. The more I have been given the opportunity to process my own relationship with conflict, I have shifted from seeing it as always a negative to seeing conflict as inherently neutral and can even present an opportunity. Through challenging times we can encounter the potential for learning and progress. I have found my own voice and am open to engaging my own power when I am faced with conflict, which has been quite a profound learning experience. Since beginning my journey with Beloved Conversations, I am able to speak up when I see injustices occurring, with the focus on returning to right relationship and our covenant with one another.

Since enrolling in this course, I have encountered various levels of microaggressions during meetings or conversations, which I have felt empowered to address directly and calmly. This program has given me tools for handling concerns related to racial justice and other social justice issues when they occur, including confronting cultural appropriation.

Unitarian Universalist Foundations

Summary

I did not grow up in a Unitarian Universalist household or a Unitarian Universalist congregation. My first experience with UU was when I learned about it in a college classroom and then visited a congregation for a church visit, as described in the Six Sources Competency. I have felt at a disadvantage or as an outsider among young adults who grew up within the denomination. I try to make up for my lack of experience by learning as much as possible by soaking up Unitarian Universalist experiences like attending local and national events, visiting other UU congregations, trainings, and more.

Since finding Unitarian Universalism, I am committed to sharing the “gospel” (Greek: good news) of how it is life-saving and life-affirming. It gave me the freedom to believe as I always have but without feel guilt or shame.

I am excited about Unitarian Universalism and the promise of hope and love it gives, and I make sharing it a priority. I relish in the moments I get to share our UU history with our children and youth - via Time for All Ages segments, heritage trips to Boston, the Sunnyhill History Site I created (found below), RE Lessons, guests in our building, and more.

I serve as staff leader on the Sunnyhill Beloved Conversations Team, which is currently focused on education and advocating for the adoption of the 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism, which reads “We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountability dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.” The current focus of the Unitarian Universalist Association on dismantling white supremacy and becoming an anti-racist, multicultural faith community is what excites me most about the future of our faith.

Formation

Structured Learning

- UU History Renaissance Module
 - Online, Summer of 2021, 15 hours
- UU Identity Renaissance Module
 - Online, Summer of 2020, 15 hours
- General Assembly, 2013, 2015, 2016
- LREDA Fall Conference, 2015, 2017, 2019
- Ohio Meadville District Assembly, 2013, 2016
- UU Pittsburgh Assembly, 2015-2021
- RE Week at the Mountain, 2019
- RE Week at Sea, 2012

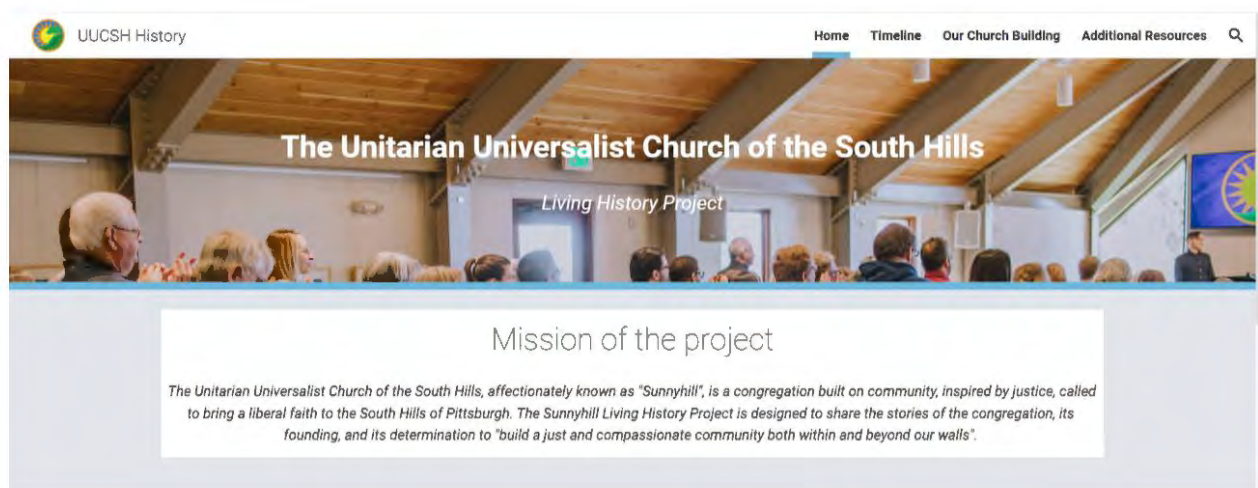
- Ohio Meadville District (now the Central East Region) Summer Institute 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018


RE Based Professional Work/ Leadership Experience

- Planning and leading COA trips to Boston to visit the UUA and other historic sights (2013-2019)
- Planning and leading COA trip to Washington DC to visit All Souls (2014)
- Leading COA and other classes for children and youth about their Unitarian Universalist Faith Tradition
- Working through various congregational transitions, including ministerial changes, membership growth, a major construction project which forced the congregation out of the building for one year, and of course the Covid 19 pandemic

Application and Integration


Sunnyhill Living History Project





Unitarian Universalism, a Timeline


This Timeline showcases Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist milestones in Pittsburgh and the wider world and takes a look at where UUCSH fits into that history.



The Path To Sunnyhill

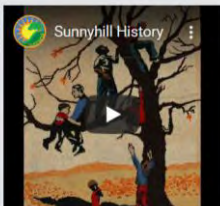
The Story of The Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills, 1965-2018

Written by Toni Murray, Gloria Snyder, and Dolph John Armstrong, Copyright 2018




About the Sunnyhill Mansion

Our Historic Building



"A Sunnyhill History" Video

This video was created by Tippi Comden in the 1980's. It tells the story of how Sunnyhill was founded and shows the beloved Tapestry being created.


UUCSH History


[Home](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Our Church Building](#)
[Additional Resources](#)

Timeline

Unitarian Universalist History, including UUCSH


About...

This timeline showcases Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist milestones in Pittsburgh and the wider world and takes a look at where UUCSH fits into that history. Click on the snapshot below to view the timeline.



OUR LIVING TRADITION

This Timeline showcases Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist milestones in Pittsburgh and the wider world and takes a look at where UUCSH fits into that history.



Snapshot of Timeline

Suggest a change

This timeline is a *living document*, always open to additions and/or edits. Have something to add? Fill out this form: [Additions and/or Edits](#)

Resources

This timeline uses the following resources:

[Here we have gathered : the story of Unitarian Universalism in Western Pennsylvania, 1808-2008](#) / Parker, Kathleen R. (Kathleen Ruth) / (2010)

UU History Timelines, Compiled by Sadie Kahn-Greene, CRE and Rev. Mr. Barb Greve

[UUA.org](#)

[UUPittsburgh](#)

[UUC of Smithton](#)

Reflection

I was inspired by the UU History Renaissance Module to create this resource for our congregation. While our congregation has a rich and interesting history, little of it was shared publicly. Before creating this resource the only information about the history of our congregation or building that was on our website was a broken link. I was determined to create a resource that can be utilized by visitors to our website seeking to learn more about UU, current congregants, and by children and youth in COA classes. I felt that it was a privilege to know the information, and it was my responsibility to share what I learned. In addition to congregational history, I also had the benefit of the time and energy to learn about Unitarian and Universalist history - so I sought to include that information as well so that it placed our congregation in the context of what was happening in the denomination and country. There is still more work to be done to help this resource reach more congregants - those that have utilized it expressed appreciation! The above examples show snapshots from the website I created. The full site can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/view/uucsh-history/home>

UU History Lesson Plan



In the mid 1700's, groups of evangelical Christians were calling for a return to the orthodox beliefs of sin and salvation. They believed all humans were sinful and destined for hell and there wasn't much they could do about it.

There were small groups that disagreed with this idea and many churches debated the nature of sin and salvation, as well as the doctrine of the trinity. By 1819 a Unitarian Minister names William Ellery Channing delivered a powerful sermon called "Unitarian Christianity" which helped give the Unitarians the language to describe their theology.

Six Years Later the UUA was formed in Boston, Mass.

William Ellery Channing is considered to be the "Father of American Unitarianism".



Universalism in America developed a little differently and in three different regions of the country. The earliest preachers of the gospel of universal salvation appeared in what were later the Middle Atlantic and Southern states. Early Universalist congregations were located in Boston, Philadelphia, and even one in a small town in South Carolina.

From its beginnings, Universalism challenged its members to reach out and embrace people whom society often marginalized. The Gloucester church included a freed slave among its charter members, and the Universalists became the first denomination to ordain women to the ministry, beginning in 1863 with Olympia Brown.



Growing out of this inclusive theology was a lasting impetus in both denominations to create a more just society.

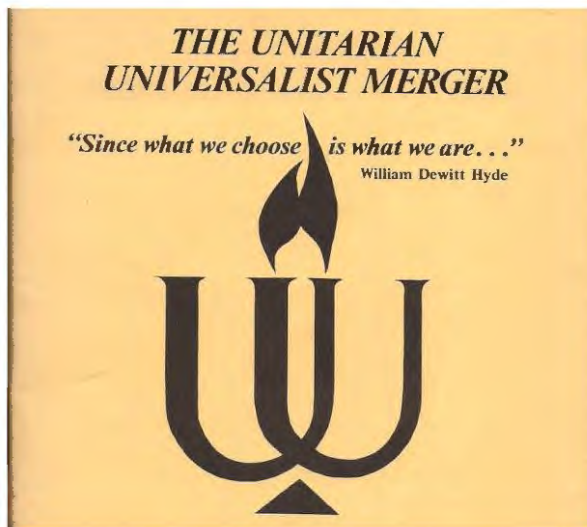
Both Unitarians and Universalists became active participants in many social justice movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unitarian preacher **Theodore Parker** was a prominent abolitionist, defending fugitive slaves and offering support to American abolitionist John Brown.



Other reformers included Universalists such as Charles Spear who called for prison reform, and **Clara Barton** who went from Civil War “angel of the battlefield” to become the founder of the American Red Cross.

Unitarians such as Dorothea Dix fought to “break the chains” of people incarcerated in mental hospitals, and Samuel Gridley Howe started schools for the blind.

For the last two centuries, Unitarians and Universalists have been at the forefront of movements working to free people from whatever bonds may oppress them.



By the middle of the twentieth century it became clear that Unitarians and Universalists could have a stronger liberal religious voice if they merged their efforts, and they did so in **1961**, forming the **Unitarian Universalist Association**.



Many Unitarian Universalists (UUs) became active in the civil rights movement.

James Reeb, a Unitarian Universalist minister, was murdered in Selma, Alabama, after he and twenty percent of the denomination's ministers responded to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s call to march for justice.

Reflection

These slides show part of a UU History lesson that the 2022 COA Class participated in. The text and information from the slides came from the work of Rev. Mark W. Harris, which I slightly edited. I personally find our UU History to be interesting but complicated - and trying to teach about it to young folks is challenging. I am constantly trying to think of ways to make UU History and Theology more accessible and interactive - which is a task that is ongoing.

Showcasing our Principles and Sources

The 7 Principles of *Unitarian Universalism*

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 7 Principles of *Unitarian Universalism*

1. We believe that each and every person is important.
2. We believe that all people should be treated fairly and kindly.
3. We believe that we should accept one another and keep on learning together.
4. We believe that each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.
5. We believe that all persons should have a vote about the things that concern them.
6. We believe in working for a peaceful, fair, and free world.
7. We believe in caring for our planet Earth, the home we share with all living things.

The 6 Sources of *Unitarian Universalism*

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 people 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.

Sunnyhill Religious Education

Chalice Lighting

We are Unitarian Universalists.

The church of the open mind, loving heart, and helping hands.

Together we care for our earth

And work for friendship and peace in our world



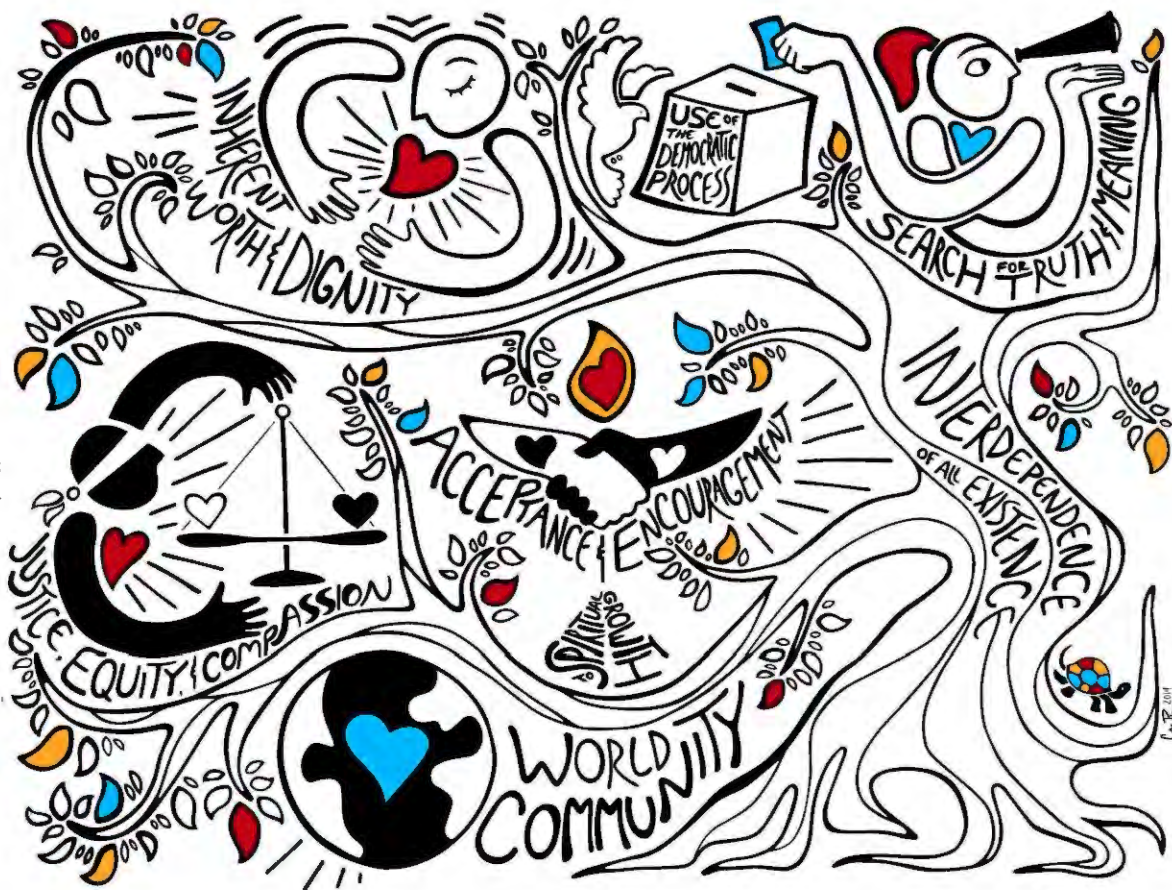
The Flaming Chalice, symbol of

Unitarian Universalism

A flame within a chalice (a cup with a stem and foot) is a primary symbol of the Unitarian Universalist faith tradition. Many of our congregations kindle a flaming chalice in gatherings and worships and feature the chalice symbol prominently. Hans Deutsch, an Austrian artist, first brought together the chalice and the flame as a Unitarian symbol during his work with the Unitarian Service Committee during World War II. To Deutsch, the image had connotations of sacrifice and love. Unitarian Universalists today have many different interpretations of the flaming chalice, including the light of reason, the warmth of community, and the flame of hope.

Reflection

Each of our classrooms was designed as a multi-purpose space, utilized by children and youth during RE, by the choir for rehearsals, by small groups (congregational and community), and by others. I wanted to utilize the wall space to remind everyone in the rooms of the UU Seven Principles, the Six Sources of our Faith, and the symbol that connects us, the Flaming Chalice. I was unable to find posters that incorporated each of these items in a uniform and visually appealing way, so I created them and had them printed and laminated. They are now on display in each classroom in our building and serve as a regular, helpful reminder and help during lessons. Whether there is a group of 8th graders discussing how the principles can inform social justice causes and actions, or newcomers to the congregation just learning about what it means to be a UU, it has been helpful to have these posters on display in every room.



Reflection

The final image is particularly awesome. It is a mural that was designed and painted by a young adult in our congregation, Claire Pullen. Claire grew up at UUCSH and is super talented. I commissioned this mural for a large wall in our youth room. The concept, “a visual representation of the seven principles” was my idea and she brought it to life in the most amazing way. After designing and painting the mural, Claire had posters made of the design which I brought to the LREDA Fall Conference and sold as a fundraiser for our youth group.

Lenses

Technology

Technology, including graphics, videos, social media, and other online resources bridges the gaps of space and time. By utilizing these and other tech aspects, we can bring stories of Unitarian Universalists from history and across the world to the children, youth, and adults we serve in our congregations. I utilize technology to share these stories in RE classes, COA classes, and in the Sunnyhill Living History project showcased previously. Whether the venue is online or in person, there are ways to use technology to enhance the RE offerings and to bring diverse voices into the space that may not already be present.

Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism

It is imperative that we include voices from the margins when thinking and teaching about Unitarian Universalism. This is the only way for us to move forward today as a faith that is eager to serve. I seek to introduce individuals of color to our children and congregation to encourage them instead of only talking about the “most famous” Unitarian Universalists. Our faith has a rich history of “standing on the side of love” and being an advocate for racial, environmental, reproductive, and LGBTQIA+ justice... most of the time. However, we need to continue to teach and learn the stories of the times when we, as UUs, did not live up to our highest ideals as well as the times that we did.

Worship

Summary

As Unitarian Universalists, so much of our time and energy is focused outside of ourselves. Members of UUCSH include public school teachers bringing the message of diversity and inclusion in the classroom, court watchers showing up to hold our elected judges accountable, and environmentalists specializing in mine drainage making our local water supplies cleaner and greener. Among us are individuals living their Unitarian Universalist values personally and professionally every day. Sunday worship is one of the places where those individuals get to live their UU values spiritually, to focus inside the self.

On Sunday mornings these dedicated and determined individuals gather to have their spirits renewed. The Sunday worship experience is more than a sermon. Each component of a worship service is as unique and important as the next and has a purpose: to create a sacred space. If you gathered a group of UUs and asked about the most meaningful component of a worship service, I am confident you would get a different response from each one. It is the role of the church staff and worship volunteers to create that sacred space to fill the spiritual cups of those that gather on Sunday morning so that they can continue to share their gifts with the wider world.

Worship speaks to the senses; it is visual, audible, and tactile. It provides a container for spiritual fulfillment, encouraging the participant to think and feel.

I collaborate on worship creation in various forms, including with youth and children, with other religious professionals, and with lay leaders. Attending a worship service and producing one are both such fulfilling experiences!

With youth and young people, my role has been to coach, providing them tools and insight but stepping aside so that they can shine. Time For All Ages segments have only been consistently part of my role for the last few years. When our current minister, Rev. Jim Magaw was called to serve our congregation, he came with strong storytelling skills, which he shared with our children each Sunday morning. I typically only presented the story in worship when he was not in the pulpit. That changed in 2020 when the pandemic closed our church doors, and I asked to take on this responsibility. I felt called to contribute to worship and get in front of the camera so that I could maintain a connection with the congregation. Not only was I adding the skill of creating/finding a meaningful TFAA segment, but it was virtual and required an additional layer of learning: video production. During the pandemic, I created over 40 TFAA segments that were used during our worship services. I handled all aspects of these videos, from the story/lesson and script to recording and video creation. For each of them, I sought to lift marginalized voices when possible and looked for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) authors and stories to share. To incorporate various learning/listening styles, I included other forms of media, from images of cracking a bowl and gluing it back together to showcase Kintsugi or the music of the song "Which Side Are You On" during the telling of the story by the same name by George Ella Lyon during a Labor Day service.

Now that we have returned to in-person worship at UUCSH, I maintain the responsibility of sharing TFAA each Sunday, and it has been such a gift to grow my connections with the congregation in this way.

Formation

Structured Learning

- Worship Renaissance Module
 - Denver CO, November 2019, 15 hours

RE Based Professional Work/ Leadership Experience

- Creating weekly Time for All Ages Segments for Sunday Worship Services (2020-current)
- Co-creating youth and Coming of Age Sunday Worship services (2013-current)
- Co-creating Beloved Conversations Worship Services (2022)
- Co-creating Multigenerational Worship Services (2012-present)
- Creating and Presenting Worship Services
 - “We are Not Nones”, 2013
 - “Sarah Grimke”, 2014
 - “Dandelions and Butterflies: My Own Coming of Age”, 2022
- Online Time for All Ages Segments
 - 2020-2021

Application and Integration

Coming of Age Service

Work Product 1: Order of Service

Order of Service: May 2, 2021

Ring the Bell

Welcome: McKenna Kimberlin

Gathering Music: “We Begin Again in Love” [Les Kleen], Buddy Rieger

Opening Words: “The Voice”, [Shel Silverstein], Evan Kreg

Lighting the Chalice: “Across the Distance” [Laura Thompson], COA Class
Across the distance, the light from within me shines, sending love to all

Across the distance, your light is fuel that warms me
and helps to keep my own light burning
Together, we keep the flame of community burning bright

Hymn: "Come Come Whoever You Are"

(1) Morning has come, arise and greet the day!
Dance with joy and sing a song of gladness!
The light of hope here shines upon each face.
May it bring faith to guide our journey home.
(2) A new day dawns, once more the gift is giv'n.
Wonder fills this moment shared together.
The light of peace here shines upon each face.
May it bring faith to guide our journey home.
(3) Open our eyes to see that life abounds;
open hearts to welcome it among us.
The light of love here shines upon each face.
May it bring faith to guide our journey home.

Time for All Ages: "Rainbows in the Windows" [Jenn Blosser]

Special Music: "A Million Dreams" [Benj Pasek and Justin Paul], McKenna Kimberlin

Joys and Sorrows

Meditation/Prayer: "A Prayer for the Faithifiers" [Hilary Allen], Maya Clevenger

Musical Meditation: "Meditation on Breathing," [Sarah Dan Jones]

Introduction to Coming of Age: Jennifer McGlothin, Director of Religious Education

Credo Statement 1: Jude Kashlan

Credo Statement 2: Evan Kreg

Musical Response: "Spirit of Life", [Carolyn McDade]

Credo Statement 3: Henry Thornton

Credo Statement 4: Maya Clevenger

Credo Statement 5: McKenna Kimberlin

Musical Response: “There’s A River Flowing in My Soul”

Offering: McKenna Kimberlin and Jude Kashlan

Online Giving: www.sunnyhill.org

Text to Give: 412-324-3130

Offertory: “Träumerei” [Robert Schumann], Buddy Rieger

Extinguishing the Chalice [Elizabeth Selle Jones]: COA Class

We extinguish this flame
but not the light of truth,
The warmth of community,
or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts
until we are together again.

Closing Words: [F. Scott Fitzgerald], Evan Kreg

Work Product 2: 2021 Script (Sample)

2021 Script .DOCX

File Edit View Tools Help

Video 11 Musical Meditation Meditation on Breathing

Video 12 Introduction to Coming of Age Jen

Coming of Age is a program offered every year to eighth grade students at Sunnyhill, the Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills. Each September a new group of Religious Education students set out on a spiritual journey, asking the big questions and thinking about their own spirituality. They will soon share their belief statements, the culmination of the class and their time thus far at Sunnyhill.

...

Video 13 Credo Statement 1: Jude

Video 14 Credo Statement 2: Evan

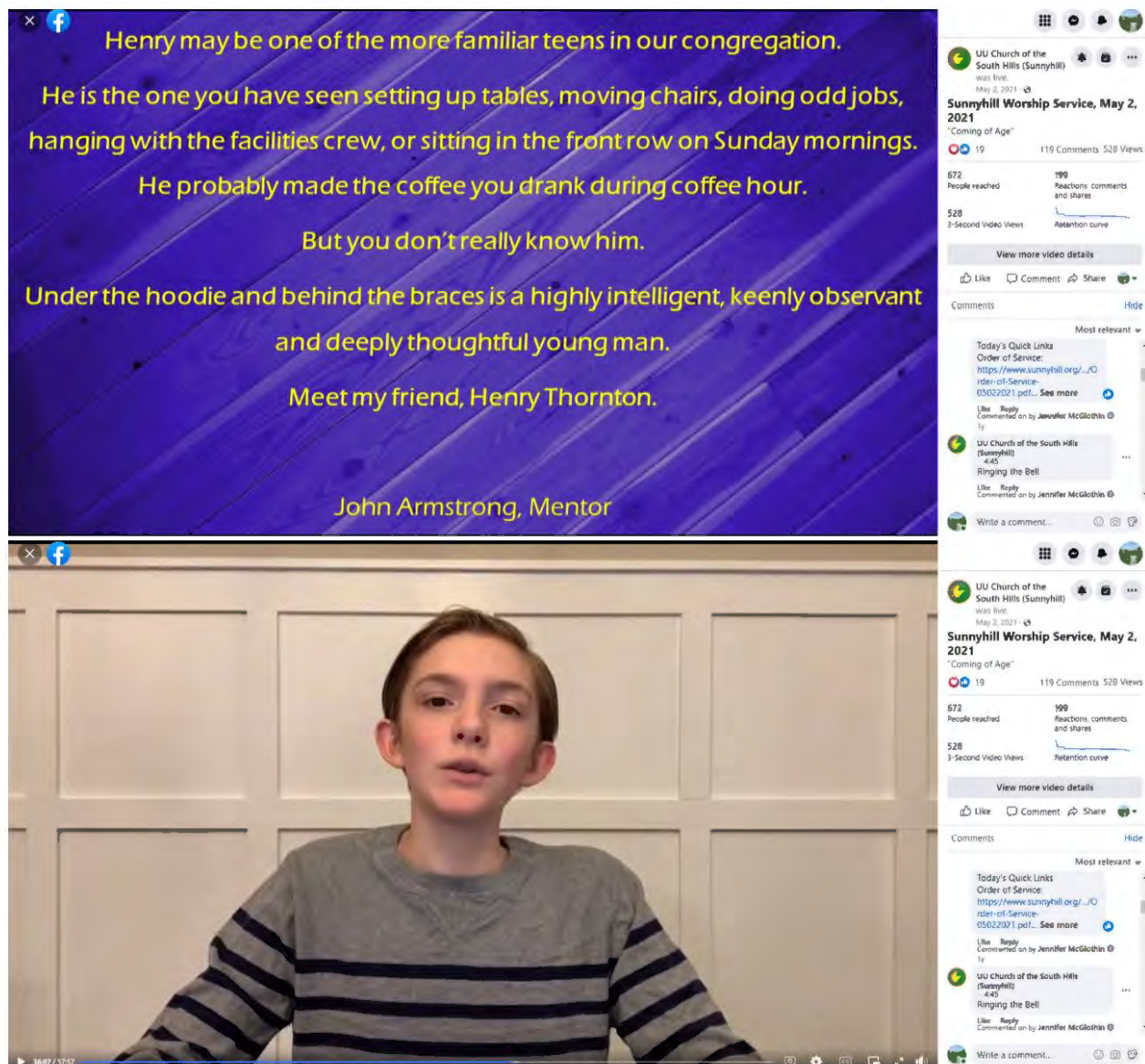
Video 15 Credo Statement 3: Henry

Video 16 Credo Statement 4: Maya

Video 17 Credo Statement 5: McKenna

Video 18 Musical Response: There's a River Flowing in my Soul

Work Product 3: Service Video Snapshots



Work Product 4: COA Ceremony

COA Ceremony for Zoom, May 2021

Adapted from: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/we-carry-flame>

Jen: Welcome everyone to our Virtual Coming of Age Ceremony! We so appreciate seeing all of your faces together as we honor our 2020-2021 Coming of Age Class. This year's COA students are Maya Clevenger, Jude Kashlan, McKenna Kimberlin, Evan Kreg, and Henry Thornton.

Let us begin.

Highlight Rev Jim and Jen's screens

Rev. Jim:

Across the generations we have carried the flame.

We fought injustice, sang songs, spoke for truth, and built something lasting.
We join in the line and we carry the flame forward.

(light chalice)

Pause while Rev. Jim's chalice is being lit

Highlight John, Mark, Lindsay, Janie, Jay

John, with all present mentors spotlighted:

Across the generations we are tending the flame.

Hand in hand together we share in the work of fighting injustice, singing the songs, speaking the truth

And we are here to build something lasting.

We join in the line and we carry the flame forward

(light chalice)

Pause while all mentor chalices are lit

Highlight Alex and Owen

Youth (Alex and Owen spotlighted)

Alex: Across the generations we have been nourished by this flame.

We are singing new songs, breaking old barriers, sharing in the work

Owen: And as we find our own space in what has been, we are here to make space for the next person as well

We join in the line and we carry the flame forward.

(Both light chalice)

Pause while Youth's chalice is being lit

Highlight Henry, McKenna, Maya, Jude, Evan

Henry, with all CoA families spotlighted

Across the generations, this flame comes to us.

We are here for the songs, for the justice, for the community sharing the work

We are here now, too, to build something new and lasting. We are ready for a new day together.

We join in the line and we carry the flame forward.

(All CoA families light chalices)

Add Jen

Jen: And now, the flame has been passed from minister, to mentor, to youth. The Sunnyhill congregation will support you as you carry the chalice flame forward.

Welcome and Congratulations to the 2021 Coming of Age Class! Let's give all of these wonderful young people our applause! Feel free to join in by congratulating our youth via the chat.

These examples come from the 2021 COA Worship Service and include the Order of Service, a sample of the video “script”, screenshots from the service itself, and the COA Ceremony which took place directly following the service on Zoom. While each COA year and service presents challenges, the pandemic introduced new ones. The youth were not able to meet in person for any sessions, did not spend any in-person time with their mentors during the program, and all service planning took place online. My task was to bring a meaningful experience to the students, to facilitate the opportunity for deep learning and growth, and to share the gifts that these wonderful young people have with the congregation through a virtual worship service that spoke to the minds and hearts of the congregation. These examples showcase various levels of the latter component, the virtual worship service, and how it came together to achieve that goal.

Reflection

The service was well received by the congregation and by the families involved. I was particularly proud of the COA ceremony, which followed the service - though still part of the worship experience. Rituals play an important role in our faith tradition - and having this component be interactive and experiential was vital.

Online Time for All Ages

Work Product 1: Mama’s Day Script

Mama’s Day / Julia Ward Howe

Sources: The Radical Roots of Mother's Day By Rachel Walden:

<https://www.uua.org/pressroom/stories/radical-roots-mothers-day>

<https://www.uua.org/reproductive/action/mamas-day>

<https://www.uua.org/worship/holidays/mothers-day>

<https://mamasday.org/>

Long before Mother’s Day was celebrated with brunches and flower bouquets, Unitarian Julia Ward Howe wrote her Mother’s Day Proclamation to urge women across the world to join the cause of peacebuilding. Her words held a radical call to create peace that still resonates today:

Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience.

We, the women of one country, will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.

From the bosom of the devastated Earth a voice goes up with our own. It says: "Disarm! Disarm!"

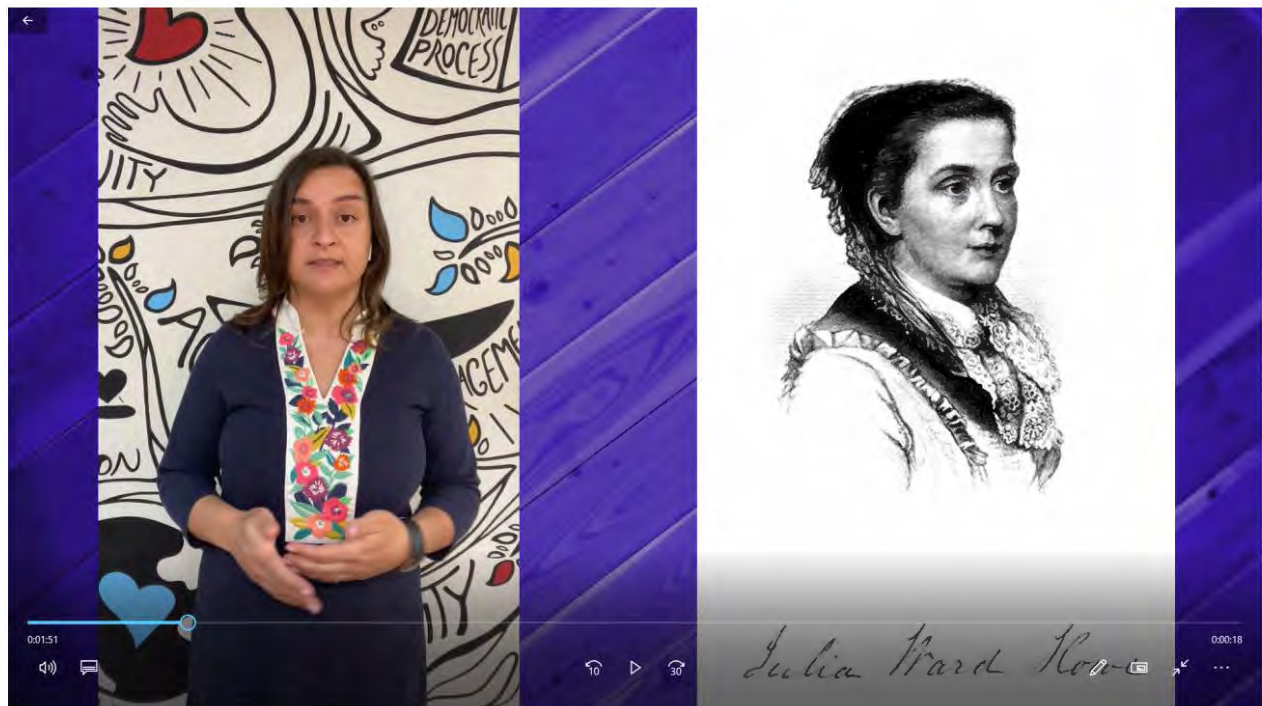
Following her proclamation, Howe began advocating the creation of a “Mother’s Day for Peace” to be held on June 2 each year. The initiative lasted about 25 years. Afterward, Methodist Anna Jarvis campaigned to have a national Mother’s Day holiday to honor the important role of mothers. By 1917, Mother’s Day was a national holiday. Over time, though, Jarvis came to lament the commercialization of the holiday.

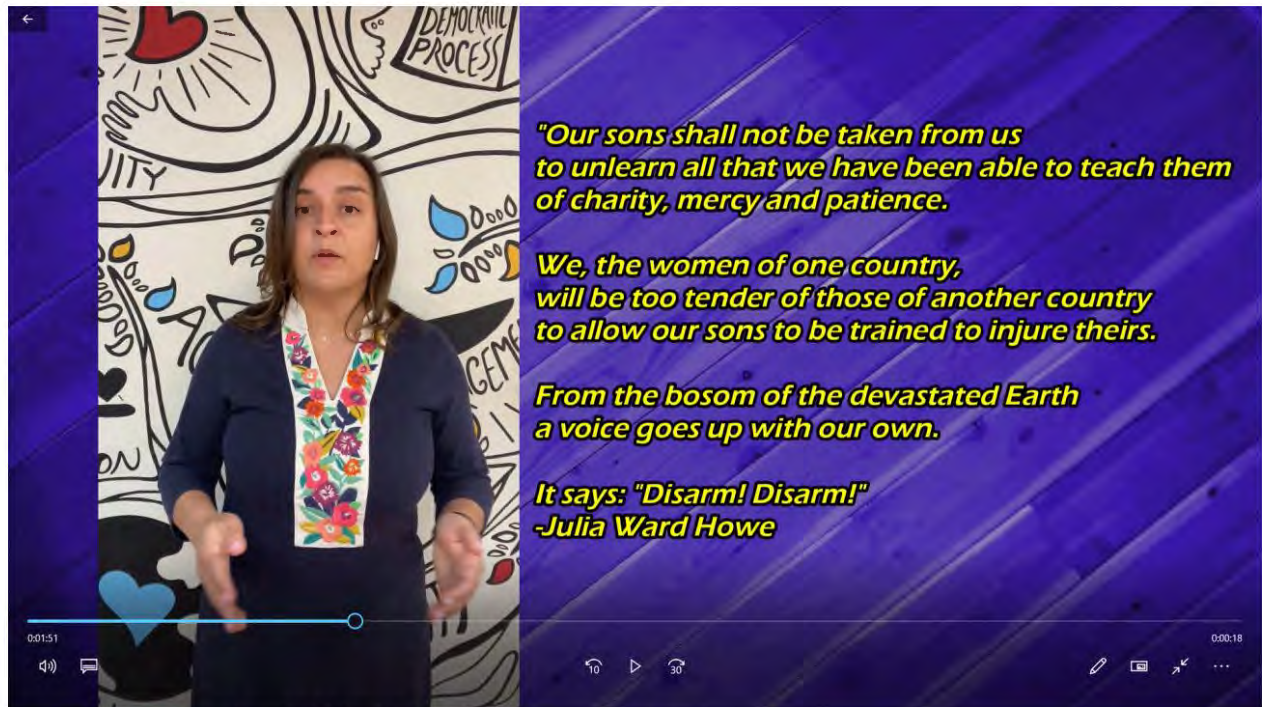
The history of Mother's Day reminds us that it is more than a day for flowers and pancakes. It's a time to highlight the aspects of motherhood that are not usually visible in the greeting card aisles. It's a call to honor the resiliency of all those who mother, especially those who bear the brunt of hurtful policies or who are weighed down by stigma in our culture. It's an opportunity to take action to create the conditions so that all families can thrive.

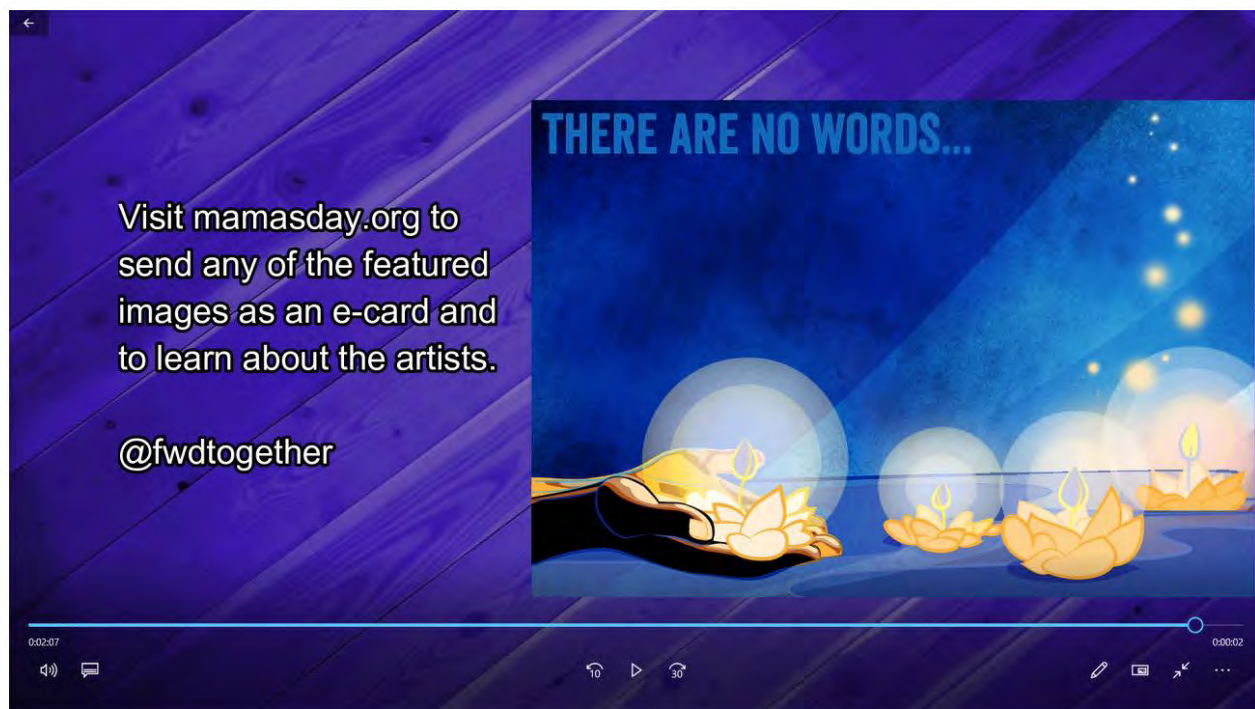
So, this Mama's Day, let us carry with us Julia Ward Howe's vision. Let's continue to stand up for peace, justice, and love. Let's remember and celebrate those who do the hard work of caring, nurturing, and teaching in our lives and in our society. In addition, Let's help bring incarcerated mothers home, later in the service we have more information on an important initiative doing just that. Happy Mama's day.

(add images from this database of cards: <https://mamasday.org/art/>)

Work Product 2: Screenshots of TFAA Video







This is a sample of a virtual Time For All Ages Segment from May 2021, including the full script and screenshots of the video that was shared during worship. Sharing stories that encourage deeper thinking for both children and adults is exciting! At times I can find picture books, fables, folk tales, and worship web resources that fit the message of the sermon. Other times, I feel called to write something that better suits the lesson, and this is one of those examples.

Reflection

Since taking on the role of TFAA creation on a regular basis, I have noticed a change in the interactions I have with both children and adults in the congregation. Many congregants have gotten to know me in a different way. I share a bit of my heart each time I tell a story or share a lesson on Sunday mornings, and the response I have received from the community has been overwhelmingly positive.

Sermon Writing and Full Service Creation

Work Product: Order of Service

Order of Service: July 17, 2022

Sermon Title: Butterflies and Dandelions: My Own Coming of Age

Sermon Description: DRE Jennifer McGlothlin reflects on the last decade of service to Sunnyhill and her own path to spiritual awakening, which is grounded in the resilience and interdependence found in the natural world.

Gathering Music: "Spirit of Life, Variation in a Minor Key" [Carol McDade/Dawn Moeller] Dawn Moeller

Welcome: Brad Convis, Worship Associate

Opening Words: [Andrew Pakula]

Lighting the Chalice: "For the Web of Life" [Paul Sprecher], Brad Convis

We light this chalice for the web of life which sustains us,
For the sacred circle of life in which we have our being,
For the Earth, the Sky, Above and Below, and
For our Mother Earth, and for the Mystery.

Hymn: I've Got Peace Like a River

1 I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river in my soul. I've
got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river in my soul.

2 I've got joy like a fountain ...

3 I've got love like an ocean ...

4 I've got pain like an arrow ...

5 I've got tears like the raindrops ...

6 I've got strength like a mountain ...

Time for All Ages: "Faith is Like a Walking Stick" [Rev. Gary Kowalski], Jen and Brad

Children's Recessional: "As You Go" [Suzelle Lynch/Ruben Piirainen]

As you go, may joy surround you,

As you go, go in peace.

Know our love is with you always,

As you go, as you go

Special Music: "A Single Flower Grows" [Jennie Anne Wagner & Douglas E. Wagner] Sunnyhill
Choir

Joys and Sorrows: We hold you in our hearts

Meditation and Prayer: "Part of a Larger Life" [John Saxon]

Musical Meditation: Spirit of Life

Spirit of Life, come unto me.

Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.

Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;

Move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.

Roots hold me close; wings set me free;
Spirit of Life, come to me, come to me.

Spirit of Love, come unto me.
Deep in my soul all the mystery of creation.
Teach me to care, peace let there be;
Lead me to truth, showing forth the paths of wisdom.
Roots hold me close, wings set me free,
Spirit of Love, come to me, come to me.

Sermon: Jen McGlothlin

Hymn: The Oneness of Everything

1. Far beyond the grasp of hands, or light to meet the eye, past the reaches of the mind, There find the key to nature's harmony in an architecture so entwined. Like the birds whose patterns grace the sky and carry all who join in love expanding, The message of peace will rise in flight taking the weight of the world upon its wings, In the oneness of ev'rything.

2. Peace is in the dance of trees, who stir before the first breath of wind is yet perceived. Trust in the song, becoming one with the dance, and all mysteries can be believed. Songs of lives long past that touch our own are written in the earth evergiving, And now to maintain the harmony gives to us all lives worth living, For the oneness of ev'rything.

3. Still we seek to find a truth that we might understand and reduce to terms defined Vast and immeasurable time and space all so overwhelmingly designed. Oh, passing years just might I know the faith that winters in the heart to be reborn in spring. To hear and to feel the pulse of life enters my soul as a song to sing, Of the oneness of ev'rything.

Offering: [worship associate introduces]

Offertory: "Let the Mystery Be" [Iris DeMent] Claire Pullen

Extinguishing the Chalice [Elizabeth Selle Jones]: worship associate
We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,
The warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Closing Words: [Kathy A. Huff], Brad Convis

Reflection

I recently celebrated 10 years of service at UUCSH, and to honor their gifts to me I created (with help, of course!) a worship service and wrote a sermon. The above sample is the

Order of Service. Creating a full worship service is an important learning opportunity for all in church leadership; it gives insight into the work of the minister, provides an opportunity to collaborate with musicians and lay leaders in a different way, and invites the community into getting to know the leader as a religious professional. The sermon I presented gave insight into my credo, which was well received by the congregation. The full service is available here:

<https://youtu.be/gY7I7aLmz0c>.

Lenses

Technology

The above examples, Virtual COA Service, Virtual TFAA, and my worship service, each required a strong hold on various tech aspects. I grew my technology skills exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly concerning worship. I learned how to use video creation and editing software Wondershare Filmora, found ways to incorporate interesting graphics using Canva, Google Slides, and Powerpoint, learned the options for sharing digital media, used Dropbox to collaborate with both youth and adults for various service components, and utilized Zoom to connect with congregants and leaders regularly.

Anti-Racist, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism

Every entry point is an opportunity to include an ARAOMC lens - and worship is one of the most direct times. I have sought to share Anti-Racist and Multicultural stories from diverse authors consistently. It is part of our responsibility to lift marginalized voices as much as possible. In the last few years, I shared stories about Mae Jemison, Joanne Bland, Langston Hughes, Ida B. Wells, and many more leaders of color.

I enjoyed looking for ways to make the Time for All Ages segments inclusive and approachable - but also multi-sensory to reach different types of learners and listeners. Visuals, in particular, are a regular component, but I also try to include touch and sound when possible.

During the pandemic when everything shifted to virtual, it was important for our congregation to make the services accessible - I did this by sharing the Order of service in advance and also typing it each Sunday in the Facebook feed so that digital screen readers could follow along. I also created a podcast, which included a condensed version of the Sunday morning worship experience, which is uploaded each week so that our message can reach individuals who prefer an auditory version.