

UUCO Religious Education for 2008-2009

Dear Congregation,

We have an exciting RE year in front of us. This was clear from the annual RE potluck dinner at Hans and Sharon's house a couple of weeks ago. Parents and those interested in RE attended. After much discussion and good food we came up with a plan for this coming year.

Number of Children and Class Breakdown

We estimate we will have just under thirty children/youth involved in RE this year.

We will divide the children into five groups based upon grade level: Pre-K, Lower Elementary (K through 2nd grades), Upper Elementary (3rd through 5th grades), Middle School (6th through 8th grades), and High School (9th through 12th grades).

Physical Space and Scheduling

The fact we are growing is a good thing. However, in light of our limited space, it does present a problem in terms of scheduling. Thus, this year we are trying something new. The Pre-K, Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary groups will meet during the service as in the past. Pre-K and Lower Elementary will use the two classrooms in the main building while Upper Elementary will meet in the expansion building (also known as the trailer). Similarly, as they did last year, the High School youth group will meet off-site at some point during the week. Our fantastic High School group leaders, Ross and Skadi, will again lead this group. This leaves our Middle School group. Since we have no available room during the service for this group to meet, they will instead meet at 9:45 on RE Sundays. This will permit them to hold their RE class, and then either participate in the service or to serve as teaching assistants in the younger RE classes. We are hopeful this will work out.

Theme for the Year

After much discussion, the consensus at the RE potluck was that we should focus on one theme for the year. The hope is that this will provide some continuity to the children. This year our overall theme will be World Religions. We will divide the year into two segments. In the fall semester the focus will be on non-western religions, while in the spring semester the focus will be on the Judeo-Christian tradition. We will emphasize common themes throughout as well as any overlap with the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism.

RE Coordinators

Each RE group has a coordinator. The coordinator is not the person who will teach every class. Rather, the coordinators will help ensure that the each group runs smoothly. They will seek to coordinate the lessons among the teachers, help the individual teachers select lesson plans, remind the teachers of their upcoming RE Sunday classes, and collect the class summaries (see below) from the teachers after each class. The following have volunteered to serve as coordinators for the coming year:

| Class/Group | Coordinator | Phone | Email |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|
| Pre-K | Susie Pedigo | 513-6219 | spedigo@olemiss.edu |
| Lower Elementary (K – 2 nd grades) | Laura Boughton | 236-4213 | lboughton@spsd.k12.ms.us |
| Upper Elementary (3 rd – 5 th grades) | Mary Solomon | 236-1151 | geesolomon@mindspring.com |
| Middle School (6 th – 8 th grades) | Paul Goggans | 234-8212 | goggans@olemiss.edu |
| High School | Ross Haefler & Skadi Snook | | ross@olemiss.edu |

RE Teachers

As with the past couple of years, we expect to have a varied group of people volunteering to teach RE classes. We envision the teacher duties to include selecting a lesson plan and preparing for class. In doing so, the teacher should check with the class coordinator or the prior Sunday's teacher to see what has already been covered. We are hoping this will provide some continuity for the kids and enable us to stay on topic in terms of the chosen theme. The teacher should also contact the kids in their upcoming class to both remind them / encourage them to attend, and to get a realistic feel for how many kids will be in their particular class. Above all, the teachers should ensure the kids have a fun and worthwhile time at RE.

As mentioned above, one thing we are hoping to be able to do this upcoming year is to ensure that there is some continuity in terms of what is taught throughout the year. With this in mind, we are asking that at some point after a teacher has taught a class, he or she prepare a short summary of what was covered, what text was used, what chapters covered as well as what

worked and what did not. This summary should then be forwarded to that RE group's coordinator. The easiest way might be to simply send the summary to the coordinator in an email. The coordinator will then collect all summaries and pass the information along to the upcoming RE teachers.

RE Class Structure

We had some discussion about whether too much structure and similarity in each class can become too ritualistic, and whether that is something we want to encourage or not. That aside, we are hoping that each RE class can begin in a similar way, maybe with a lighting of a Chalice in the RE room and the kids saying a few words in conjunction with this. At the end of the class, again as in the past, the children will join the congregation for the closing circle. One child should be chosen by his or her classmates to tell the congregation what they (the children) did in RE that Sunday. Ideally this position should rotate among the children in the each class so all children will have the opportunity to talk in the closing circle. As always, the basic rules within each class include respect for all. It might be a good idea for the teachers to emphasize the importance of this at the beginning of each class.

Children/Youth Participation in Congregation Service

To what extent the children can participate with and in the congregation services on RE Sundays was a topic of discussion at the potluck meeting. Children and youth are always welcome in the main service. On RE Sundays they will generally participate in beginning of the service. How long they will stay with the Congregation will depend upon the individual teacher and the particular order of the service. However, the opening words, the lighting of the Chalice and any beginning musical interludes should always be child appropriate. If there is a consensus that we wish to involve the children and youth further with the services, on both RE and non-RE Sundays, we may want to consider changing the format of the service as a whole. For example, the announcements, which sometimes tend to be long and not to interesting from a child's point of view, could be placed at the end of the service instead of the beginning. Similarly, when there is a non-RE Sunday service that might be particularly interesting for children, we might want to encourage child and youth attendance by involving the children and youth in the service. They could, for example, do an opening reading, pass the collection plate, or simply join in the

singing. Any changes to the service format as whole will, of course, have to be debated and considered by the congregation as a whole.

Texts, Snacks and Supplies

We have several texts that should be appropriate for our theme this year. Some of the texts we may want to consider using include:

- a. Seven Principles
 - i. “In Our Hands: A Peace and Social Justice Program”
 1. Suggested grade level 4-6.
 - ii. “Rainbow Children: A Racial Justice and Diversity Program for Ages 5 to 8.”
 - iii. “Spinning Tales. Weaving Hope: Stories of Peace, Justice & the Environment.”
 1. Stories, songs and art activities.
 2. Probably Upper Elementary.
- b. Judeo Christian traditions
 - i. Jesus curriculum
 1. We have a book for this topic
 - ii. Old Testament stories
 1. “Timeless Themes”
 - a. “Bible Songs on Timeless Themes”
- c. World Religions
 - i. Great Unitarians throughout history
 1. “We Believe”
 - a. “Workbook for We Believe”
 - b. A broad age range.
 - ii. “Travel in Time: Unitairian Universalism for Grades 5 and 6”
 - iii. “A Stepping Stone Year: A Program for eight-to-ten year olds.”
 1. Includes creation myths, science, birth stories and famous Unitarians
 - iv. Holidays and Holy Days

1. Xeroxed material in Red Folder
 - a. Full course text
 - b. Can pick and choose sub-topics
 - c. Broad age group range.
- d. Age group appropriate
 - i. “Around the Church Around the Year: Unitarian Universalism for Children – Kindergarten to Grade 2.”
 1. Community building text
 2. Introduces Unitarianism and community of the Congregation
 - ii. “Growing Times: A Pre-School Curriculum”
 1. In big green binder.
- e. There are additional curricula available
- f. Stories/texts from home libraries

The class coordinators will be able to aid the teachers in this regard. Hopefully we can select a couple of texts to use throughout each semester, keeping in mind our theme. Once we determine the texts, we will order additional copies. Ideally we should have at least three copies of the texts that we are using. We will also ensure that there are always appropriate snacks available for the kids for RE Sundays. A happy stomach usually means a happy and attentive kid. Hans and Susie P. will take care of the latter task. We will also ensure that there are sufficient and appropriate supplies in each classroom.

RE Teacher Sign Up

Finally, and most importantly, we have several RE Sundays left to fill. If you are interested in teaching an RE class, or several RE classes, this year, please contact the coordinator for the class/group you would like to teach. If at all possible, consider teaching two RE classes in a row in the same group. This should add to the continuity of the lessons for the kids. Some spots have already been filled. Please review the below table, select the dates that best fits you, and let the coordinator for you group know. We need to fill all the dates by the beginning of our fall RE season (August 24, 2008). We cannot do this without your help.

Fall 2008

Theme: World Religions

| Date | Lower Elementary 11am -noon | Upper Elementary 11am -noon | Middle School 9:45 am – 10:45 am |
|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| August 24 | Mary S. | | |
| September 7 | Dave W. | Stevie W. | |
| September 21 | Dave W. | Stevie W. | |
| October 5 | | Mary S. | |
| October 19 | | Mary S. | |
| November 2 | Laura B. | Susie P. | |
| November 16 | Laura B. | Susie P. | |
| November 30 | | Hans S. | |
| December 14 | | Hans S. | |

Spring 2009

Theme: Judeo-Christian stories and traditions

| Date | Lower Elementary | Upper Elementary | Middle School |
|-------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| January 11 | | | |
| January 25 | | | |
| February 8 | | | |
| February 22 | | | |
| March 8 | | | |
| March 22 | | | |
| April 5 | | | |
| May 3 | | | |
| May 17 | | | |

Finally, thank you all. We are looking forward to a great RE year.

Hans and Susie P.

RE co-trustees