

Sunday Schedule

Child Care (Infant-Age 3) offered at no charge in the nursery during the worship service. Drop off 10:15 & pick-up at 11:45AM.

Religious Education Classes (Pre-K-2; 3-5; 6-8) and High School Youth Group meet during the worship service.

Children attend worship for the beginning of the service, and leave for class after *A Time for All Ages*.

Once a month we have a Chapel for Youth and Children in the Payson Miller Chapel where the youth and children learn about and lead the worship before heading off to class.

The Reverends Cathy and Heather Rion Starr
Ministers

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"There are many paths approaching the truth that unites us"

Ministry to Families, Children & Youth

2015 ~ 2016



Unitarian Society of Hartford

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Unitarian Society of Hartford Religious Education Program

Welcome to the Unitarian Society of Hartford! As Unitarian Universalists, we strive to engage in a “free and responsible search for truth and meaning”. A key purpose of our religious education program is to provide a framework for our children as they begin their path of lifespan faith development. As such, each of our classes is designed to include a wide range of religious and philosophical traditions, and to integrate a variety of learning styles. We welcome all families and children, including those with special needs, and will make every effort to accommodate all children in our program.

We encourage families to visit our classrooms to determine if our program is a comfortable fit for your belief system. To arrange a visit, please contact our Director of Religious Education at: DRE@ushartford.com or 860-233-9897, x104.

Our Philosophy of Religious Education

Our goal is to help our children and youth:

- Gain respect and appreciation for themselves, others, all living things and the environment;
- Become integral parts of our Meeting House community;
- Develop an awareness of, and appreciation for, our Judeo-Christian heritage and other world religions that influence the formation of our religious beliefs;
- Experience the joy and inspiration of music and the arts;
- Become responsible persons who are able to make ethical decisions through which they show their care and concern for all humanity.

What Our Children Learn

Our children are taught to think for themselves, while receiving guidance on moral and ethical behavior. We allow their individual beliefs to unfold without any dogma. Our children will learn that all big religious questions have many answers, and that it is their duty to search responsibly for their own truth. Ultimately, we want our children to become mature adults who make their own decisions about what to believe and how to live.

Worship Services

Most Sundays, prior to classes, the children join the congregation in the sanctuary for the first 10-15 minutes of the service. This is a time for the children to be part of our spiritual community, and to witness the rituals of the liturgical year. A children’s message, or “Time for All Ages” is offered by our Director of Religious Education, designed to compliment the adult sermon.

Holidays and holy days are often celebrated with a multigenerational service, during which the children are invited to participate in the entire service in lieu of classes. These services are designed to speak to both adults and children, and to reinforce our connection as a spiritual community.

Chapel for Youth and Children

Once a month the youth and children gather in the chapel in lieu of the sanctuary before classes. The time allows for exploration of what worship means and allows them to participate in meaningful ways. They sing, light candles, play instruments, dance, and share readings and poems.

Additional Events

In addition to our regularly scheduled classes, we also offer dedication services for infants and children of any age as well as *coming of age* for our middle school students.

Once every 4-6 weeks we also encourage our children and youth to explore their creative side by offering a variety of one-room activities. This includes such things as incorporating drama and the arts, music, learning to respect and cultivate our environment and cooking and crafts.

Family Friendly Congregation

We are a family friendly congregation. Most of our events are appropriate for families of all ages or provide free childcare. Please look for this symbol in our programs booklet or when looking to attend events.



Faithful Journey: Grades 3-5

Students embark on a pilgrimage of faith, exploring how Unitarian Universalism translates into life choices and everyday actions. In each session, they hear historic or contemporary examples of Unitarian Universalist faith in action. Stories about real people model how participants can activate their own personal agency – their capacity to act faithfully as Unitarian Universalists – in their own lives. Students have regular opportunities to share and affirm their own stories of faithful action. Through sessions structured around the Unitarian Universalist Principles, Faithful Journeys demonstrates that our Principles are not a dogma, but a credo that individuals can affirm with many kinds of action. Over the course of the program, students discover a unity of faith in the many different ways Unitarian Universalists, including themselves, can act on our beliefs.

World Religions: Grades 6-8

World Religions will focus on what draws people to religion and the role that religion plays in people's lives. Youth will explore some of the earliest manifestations of religion as well as current religious faiths, including their beliefs, traditions, and major holidays. We will also visit various places of worship. Far from an in-depth survey of religions, the goal of the program includes considering how the religious impulse is common to all people. Most importantly, we seek to create an environment which is engaging, fun and relevant to the students personally, especially as they begin to consider their own identity and Unitarian Universalism.

High School Youth Group: Grades 9-12

The goal of this program is to offer youth the opportunity to take the lead in the development of their own personal, spiritual and social development, under the guidance and support of caring adults. Youths will learn to cultivate a safe, respectful and supportive environment for each other which will permit them to explore issues which they determine are relevant to them and of mutual concern. This is done through social justice/outreach projects which they choose as a group and take responsibility to implement. Youths will also learn cooperation, negotiation, and decision-making as they seek to understand their larger place in this world. The youth will have opportunities for field trips and other offsite activities.

Our religious education program strives to give children the necessary foundation for this lifelong task by providing a supportive, structured environment that allows them to focus on the 7 Unitarian Universalist principles in an age appropriate fashion.

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe:

- Each person is important;
- Be kind in all you do;
- We're free to learn together;
- And search for what is true;
- All people need a voice;
- Build a fair and peaceful world;
- We care for Earth's lifeboat.

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How Our Children are Taught

The 7 principles are taught using a variety of methods based in the sources of our beliefs. These include, but are not limited to:

- Fostering a continuing sense of wonder using art, science, and social justice projects;
- Learning about heroes and heroines from UU history and other historical and religious figures who were dedicated to living fair and just lives;
- Discovering the ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions, including our Judeo-Christian heritage;
- Encouraging the use of logic and reason to discern the answers to life's questions;
- Promoting practices that are in harmony with nature, the environment, and the sacred circle of life.



The Role of the Parent in Religious Education

Parents are the primary religious educators in their children's lives. Children learn values from their parents. They can help their children learn the importance of religious education by facilitating regular attendance, showing an interest in what happens each week, and volunteering their own time to the program.

Our program is cooperative, and parents are an integral part of every aspect from curriculum development through chaperoning field trips. Every adult's unique skill set is a blessing to our children. We have a variety of volunteer opportunities for parents and we hope that you will find a role which best suits your interests and talents. The DRE has a listing of needs and can help you find a spot for approximately 1-2 hours per month.

The Role of the Congregation in Religious Education

One of the primary roles of the Religious Education program is to help families become integrated into the life of the congregation. We hope of each congregation member will be welcoming to families and children, and to act in accordance with the role of spiritual companions for adults and children alike. Enthusiastic participation in multigenerational services and other family events, support for appropriate child care during church events, and consideration of the needs and rights of children when creating policy and protocol are just a few of the responsibilities of the adults in the congregation.



Summary of Programs



Nursery

Infants to 3 year olds are welcome to play in our supervised Nursery. The children will sing, color and play games in a loving and nurturing environment. The Nursery is available on Sunday mornings from 10:15AM—11:45AM and by request for community and church events. There is no charge for child care so please feel free to bring your children to the Nursery so you may fully enjoy the service.



We Are Many We Are One: Grades Pre-K - 2

This curriculum teaches children about religion through relationship building and by encouraging them to explore who they are and how they relate to others as well as how others relate to them. Through the use of stories, activities and projects, the children are encouraged to explore and discover their own uniqueness and what makes others unique as well.

The main focus will be inviting the children to explore religious learning by asking questions in a safe, non-judgmental environment in a community that shares and supports their ideas and their differences.