

Youth Spiritual Growth & Development (K-12)



Program Guide

*First Unitarian Universalist
Congregation of Ann Arbor, MI*



A Reflection on Religious Instruction From "Singing the Living Tradition", #652

By William Ellery Channing

The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own.

Not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;

Not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth;

Not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs;

Not to bind them by ineradicable prejudices to our particular sect or peculiar notions,

But to prepare them for impartial, conscientious judging of whatever subjects may be offered to their decision;

Not to burden the memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought;

Not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment.

In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish spiritual life.

Program Description

The Spiritual Growth & Development (SGD) Program is designed to empower youth to explore their beliefs about the world while being guided by the 7 principles of Unitarian Universalism.

From nursery to high school, each grade level has a curriculum that is specifically formulated to meet the needs of students as they grow. The SGD program is open to all members & visitors of the congregation.

We look forward to this year's program and how your family will be a part of its growth.

Congregation Description

The First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor has been a vital liberal religious voice in the Ann Arbor community since 1865.

We are an intentionally multigenerational, multiracial, multicultural religious community of over 600 adult members and 300 children and youth, who worship together, work together, and have fun together.

We gather to encourage and inspire each other's individual spiritual journeys, to honor and care for the natural world around us, and to join forces in furthering social justice in the Ann Arbor area and the wider world.



A Message from the Senior Minister

Greetings Good People,

Welcome to an exciting time in our congregation!

For each stage of life and for every age, we do the important and loving work of nurturing our deepest selves. We do this work in so many ways:

We build relationships -
with our inner lives
with the people who are part of our lives
with the world, seeking greater connection, justice and compassion
and with the Earth itself, honoring our interdependence.

We do.

We sing, we play, we move, we encourage, we take risk, we build trust, and we share our gifts

Our Spiritual Growth and Development ministries are essential to this important spiritual work.

My blessings as we enter into this time together. May we be accompanied by deepening connections, the presence of abiding joy and the Spirit of Life! We all have much to learn and teach in our adventures.

With warmth and encouragement,

Rev. Doug

The Reverend Douglas E. Wadkins
Interim Senior Minister
doug@uuaa.org

A message from the Assistant Minister for Spiritual Growth & Development

Welcome to our Spiritual Growth & Development program!

We strive to create a program that breaks free from the traditional model of adult teachers simply handing down information to their students. Instead, our classes focus on building healthy relationships and nurturing spirituality. Adult volunteers, staff, children and youth learn from each other and create a safe space to explore life's biggest questions. All of our classes use our 7 Unitarian Universalist Principles as a framework, although your family need not identify as Unitarian Universalists to participate.

Our classes are led by teams of dedicated volunteer teachers, many of whom return year after year to guide our children and youth. Take a moment to connect with some of our teachers and you will quickly learn that they bring a huge wealth of experience in fields such as childcare, child development, social work, nonprofit management, science, the arts and more. You will hear us say it again and again throughout the year - we have the best teachers!

Our teachers, parents and children are also supported by our professional Spiritual Growth & Development staff:

Rev. Cassandra Hartley
Assistant Minister for Spiritual Growth & Development

Aaron Gibson, LLMSW
Programs Coordinator and YRUU Coordinator

Debra Golden
Spiritual Growth & Development Assistant

Parents and other caregivers are an essential part of our program's success, so please don't hesitate to reach out to us throughout the year with your questions, concerns, ideas and passions. Thank you for partnering with us on this journey and may the year ahead be filled with the joy of learning!

~Rev. Cassandra Hartley



Spiritual Growth and Development Program Special Events Calendar

September 2016

18, Sunday: First Day of SGD classes

December 2016

18, Sunday: Multigenerational Children and Youth Service

25, Sunday: No Class, Christmas Break

March 2017

25, Sunday: YRUU-led service in Sanctuary

April 2017

17, Sunday: Multigenerational Earth Day service

May 2017

13-14, Sat. & Sunday: Coming of Age initiation weekend

21, Sunday: Last day of class for SGD program year. End of two worship services schedule.

June 2017

11, Sunday: Coming of Age Credo Service

18, Sunday: Summer Program begins (week one of 13)

September 2017

4, Sunday: Last day of Summer Program.

Principles & Program Goals

We explore spirituality from as many perspectives as possible, guided in our journeys by the seven principles of Unitarian Universalism:

- 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 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.**

Our hopes for children are:

- That they will experience relationships with other children, teachers, assistants, and mentors.
- That they will be provided a deep and broad program within which to develop their spiritual/religious understanding.
- That their SGD experiences will help to nurture their development into socially responsible, well-rounded, spiritually-grounded adults of the future.

In addition, it is our goal that all participants – children, youth, and adults,

- Are provided a safe and enriching environment for spiritual growth and development.
- Will feel inspired to participate at any level, large or small, that will be fulfilling to each individual.



Class Descriptions

NURSERY

Whether your child enjoys playing alone or playing with other toddlers, we strive to make the youngest attendees of the UUAA feel happy, loved and secure. Please stop by the Nursery and see what we are up to on Sunday mornings.

PRESCHOOL (3 and 4 year olds)

Celebrating Me and My World: Children celebrate their own wondrous qualities, and then expand outward to the things and people around them. Pre-schoolers are provided with opportunities to grow in their sense of trust and caring and to develop their self-identity and sense of connectedness with all of life.

KINDERGARTEN/FIRST GRADE

World of Wonder & Love Surrounds Us: The *World of Wonder* curriculum delves deep into the Unitarian Universalist seventh Principle of respecting and caring for nature. It is founded on the premise that direct experience in nature is essential to children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development. The *Love Surrounds Us* curriculum explores all the Principles in the context of Beloved Community of family/home, school, neighborhood. Participants engage in activities that emphasize the love they feel in community.

SECOND GRADE/THIRD GRADE

Spirit of Adventure & Peacemakers: The *Spirit of Adventure* is all about defining what it means to be a UU through hands-on activities. *Peacemakers* is a long-favorite of teachers and explores ways to resolve conflict in healthy ways.

FOURTH GRADE/FIFTH GRADE

Harry Potter and UU: Harry and UU is based on the Harry Potter series of books by J.K. Rowling, books that immerse children in the idea that one can work to make the world better. The curriculum includes many fun wizarding activities, but the main purpose of the curriculum is social action. The class forms a chapter of Dumbledore's Army and fights against seven evil "Horcruxes" during the year. The Horcruxes are real world social action projects.

SIXTH GRADE

Building Bridges: Building Bridges is a world religions program to deepen youth's understanding of the dynamic, fascinating, and varied world in which they live. It seeks to broaden their knowledge of humanity and embolden their spiritual search. Students visit congregations from various religions and discuss their basic tenants in class

SEVENTH GRADE

Values, Leadership, and Team-Building: Youth develop communication and team-building skills while exploring and discussing individual and community value systems. Connections to Unitarian Universalist traditions and social justice issues will be a foundation for group discussions and projects

EIGHTH GRADE

Our Whole Lives (OWL): A comprehensive sexuality curriculum that includes topics such as self-awareness, body awareness, values, language, anatomy, physiology, gender roles, gender equality, and relationship skills. In order to support learning and group trust levels, regular attendance is required. Parent orientation is also required.

NINTH GRADE

Coming of Age: The Coming of Age program is designed to help youth examine their own beliefs, better appreciate Unitarian Universalism, and explore how these intersect. Objectives of the Coming of Age program are to: help youth grow spiritually through transformative experiences; help youth clarify and grow more confident in their beliefs; help youth develop a special relationship with an adult mentor; and integrate youth into the Unitarian Universalist community by helping them strengthen relationships with peers and adults. The program meets both on Sunday mornings and for special events and overnights. It culminates with youth writing and offering personal credo statements to the congregation.

10th-12th GRADE – YRUU

(Young Religious Unitarian Universalists)

Students and advisors work together to plan and carry out a wide variety of activities, discussions, community service, and social justice projects throughout the year. Activities may also include traditional outings and events such as the YRUU Ski Trip, the Apple Dumpling Sale, and hosting the UUAA Rummage Sale.



Overview of Program Year & Event Descriptions

Class Meeting Times

The regular SGD program runs from September - May.

- ⇒ **Nursery and Pre-School** classrooms are always open during both the 9:30 a.m. and the 11:30 a.m. services (even when classes for older children do not meet, as at some major holidays or multigenerational Services).
- ⇒ **Kindergarten - 3rd grade** classes are offered during both the 9:30 a.m. and the 11:30 a.m. Services.
- ⇒ **Grades 4 - 12** are offered only during the 11:30 a.m. Service.

The SGD **Summer Program** offers one class for K-5 students and is offered during the 10:00am Service.

SGD Attendance & Worship Service

How does attendance at SGD classes interweave with attendance at Sunday services? This depends upon a child's grade level:

- ⇒ **Nursery and Pre-School** children go directly to their classes before service.
- ⇒ **Kindergarten through 5th** grade children attend the first 10-15 minutes of *either* service with their caretakers, before being "sung to their classrooms" by the Congregation (a regular feature of the Order of Service). Teachers escort children to their classrooms. Parents are free to escort their children to class and to return to the Sanctuary.

- ⇒ **6th - 12th** grade youth who are participating in SGD classes do not attend the service, but go directly to their classrooms at 11:30 a.m.
- ⇒ **Lighting the Sanctuary Chalice** - Typically, each Sunday children from the Kindergarten through Fifth grades serve as chalice lighters in the Sanctuary at the beginning of services. Occasionally, older children and youths light the Chalice.

Multigenerational Services

Several times a year (for example, on Earth Day), UUAA celebrates with multigenerational services which bring children, youth, and adults together in worship. SGD classes are not held during multigenerational services, although the Nursery and Pre-School classrooms remain open as usual.

Chalice Sparks Choir

The Chalice Sparks is the choir for 3rd – 8th graders at UUAA. The group meets weekly to develop musicianship and performance skills, build lasting friendships, and prepare musical offerings for Sunday worship services. The Chalice Sparks perform about once a month at both services. Following their performances choir members leave the service to rejoin their SGD classes.

Members of the Chalice Sparks make a serious commitment to the group and are expected to attend rehearsals consistently. Children are welcome to try a few rehearsals before making this commitment. Rehearsals take place on Sunday mornings from 10:40-11:20 (between services) from September through May. For more information, please contact Rick Witten (Coordinator) at rawitten@gmail.com, or Brianne Boyd (Music Director) at brnnbyd@yahoo.com.



How to Support our Children & Youth

The teaching and nurturing of UUA's children and youth belong to the entire congregation. A child's parent or guardian, however, is her or his primary spiritual teacher. In light of this we ask that parents and caretakers:

- ✋ **Attend regularly and arrive on time.** Children and youth develop a sense of belonging to their class when they attend consistently. Classmates develop projects together and create bonds of friendship and understanding. It is important for each child to be present each Sunday.
- ☸ **Introduce yourself to teachers.** Get to know your child's teachers. Take a moment to ask about activities or how your child is doing. Follow-up at home with discussions about what they are exploring in their SGD classes.
- 🌀 **Encourage appropriate dress for active participation.** UUA is fortunate in having spacious classrooms and a wide expanse of lawn, gardens, fields and woods. Sometimes classes include going outside, running, painting, and getting a little messy.
- ✡ **Nurture and share your own spiritual and religious journey.** Learn about the UU faith tradition, your own spiritual and religious self, and how you might make a difference in the world. Share your journey; talk with your child about your explorations and why you have chosen Unitarian Universalism.

- ✧ **Engage in congregational activities as a family.** Make a special effort to be with your child at family and multigenerational activities.

- 🕒 **Engage in social justice activities with your children.** Participate as a family in CROP Walk, at Alpha House, in Habitat for Humanity projects, or other endeavors.

- 📡 **Stay informed.** Read the weekly Parent Letter sent to families of registered children and youth, the Sunday Bulletin, and the monthly congregational newsletter, all available electronically. Read the bulletin boards outside each classroom, as well as the large bulletin board to the right as you enter the Spiritual Growth and Development wing on the main level. Talk with teachers and read the correspondence they send.

And most of all...

- 👤 **Volunteer!** Our Children and Youth Program is a cooperative venture which would not be possible without the dedicated contributions of UUAA parents, caregivers, and other adults. We ask you to consider carefully how you might give to the program, whether through regular teaching, helping to organize a party or event, or serving as a committee member. There are many different ways to help out with this important community work. Contact sgd@uuaa.org if you have any questions about how you can become involved.



Unitarian Universalist Principles & Purpose

Youth Version

Adult Version

This we believe and practice:

We affirm and promote:

1. Every person is important
2. All people should be treated fairly
3. We should encourage one another and learn together
4. Each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life
5. All persons should have a say about the things that concern them
6. We must work for a peaceful, fair and free world
7. We must care for our planet Earth, the home we share with all living thing

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of democratic process within our congregations and the 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