



# Religious Exploration Program 2017-2018

*"Inspiring people to take on the challenges of a changing world"*



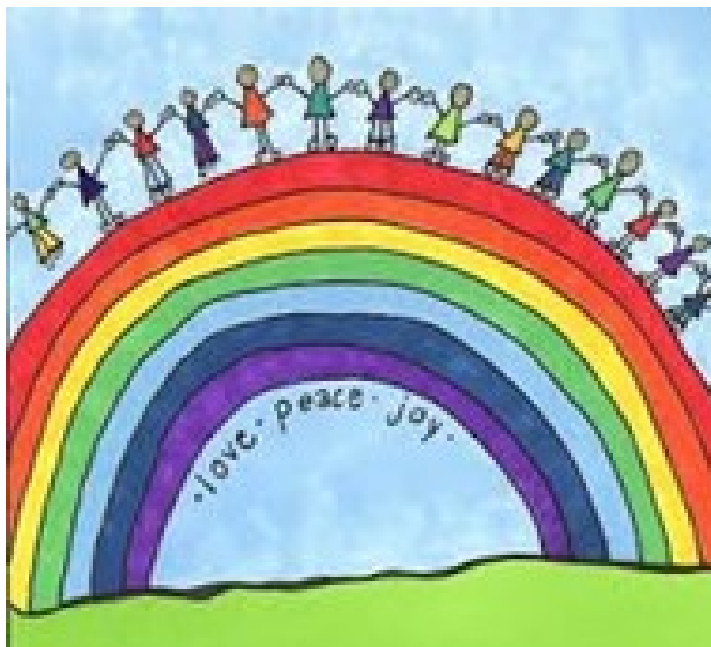
## Weaving a Tapestry of Love and Learning

<http://uucwrec.wordpress.com/>

## Mission Statement

The mission of the RE Program at UUCW is to promote a welcoming and inclusive community which values children and youth. Guided by the Seven UU Principles, we strive to nurture the spiritual development of our children and families and empower them to act on their beliefs and meet the challenges of a changing world.

Learning about and practicing: Love, Respect, and Justice



# UUCW Religious Exploration Program

In deciding what we want our children to learn during their many years in Sunday School, the Religious Exploration Committee has identified five areas:

- ⊕ A grounding in UU principles, history, and traditions
- ⊕ A study of ethics, of how to make decisions and to live as a UU
- ⊕ A celebration of the diversity of world religions and of the common threads that join us all.
- ⊕ A hands-on study of social justice and community service
- ⊕ A study of the Judæo-Christian stories and themes which have shaped our culture and our own UU tradition

We welcome all children into our Religious Exploration Program, and we recognize that all children's needs are special. Some need specific kinds of support in order for their RE experience to be successful. The RE Program makes every effort to accommodate children with special needs in our classes. Parents may choose to be present in the classroom, to provide adaptive devices, and request accommodations if necessary. Our goal is to create an inclusive community that supports the needs of all. Parents are encouraged to consult with the DREE regarding the individual needs of every child.

The Religious Exploration Program at UUCW is a cooperative. We depend on all parents to contribute their time in some way, including teaching, working with our youth programs, serving on the RE Committee, sharing their talents and assisting with special programs and events.

Our RE Program recognizes parents and guardians as their children's most important religious educators, providing the moral and spiritual base from which they will grow. We hope to provide a structure that will encourage continued positive growth in personally meaningful ways within the larger context of a religious community. We encourage questioning attitudes, seeing a child's sense of spirituality more as a fire to be lit than a bucket to be filled.

# From the Director of Religious Exploration

Dear Families,

*Drop a pebble in the water,  
just a splash and it is gone;  
But there's a half-a hundred ripples,  
circling on and on.  
Spreading from the center,  
flowing to the sea,  
And there is no telling where  
the end is going to be.*

~ Frances Slanger

When the Religious Exploration year begins, whenever that is for your child, a sacred journey also begins. Every discovery that your child makes about themselves, every connection that they make within this community is like the pebble dropped into the water. Equally, every kindness that they choose to share with others will circle on and on, out into the world, flowing from their own precious self.

We strive to engage your child with exciting, well- written curricula and unique experiences that can only be found in a faith community like ours. In our classroom, we learn about Unitarian Universalism, our seven principles, and how our religion draws from many sources:

- ⊕ The sense of awe and wonder that we all share.
- ⊕ Women and men of long ago and today — people whose lives remind us to be kind and fair.
- ⊕ The ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions.
- ⊕ Christian and Jewish teachings which tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.
- ⊕ The use of reason and the discoveries of science, the harmony of nature, and the sacred circle of life.

I truly believe that our Religious Exploration and Education experiences succeed in opening positive pathways of wonder, and discovery, and spiritual connections. The curricula, discussions, and interactions that we provide each Sunday, allow our children to become more confident in their own skin, affirming that they are worthy of deep love and respect. This community bolsters the child, encouraging them to know that they have the ability to give of themselves to others and to really begin to understand the message of equity and compassion and how it can change the world. On small act of kindness, or justice ripples outward and it always

# From the Director of Religious Exploration

matters.

What to look forward to in the 2015/16 church year:

1. Water Service
2. Incredible religious education classes with amazing teachers.
3. Youth Group Mission Trip
4. CROP Walk
5. UNICEF Halloween Carnival
6. Thanksgiving Food Drive
7. Giving Tree
8. Vespers Pageant
9. REUUnite Program for month of January
10. Anonymous Compliment Day
11. Multi- generation worship experiences and well as classroom experiences.
12. Cool Beans Coffee House
13. Youth Group Sunday Service
- 14 . Rotation Classroom Workshop
15. Special Opportunities for families and parents to unite over the course of the year.

Also:

We will offer Teen OWL for grades 8 and 9 - beginning in September and running through January.

We will be offering OWL for grades 1 and 2 in Feb/March for 6 weeks.

I look forward to spending time with

each of your children in their classrooms. We have a strong and talented group of lead teachers excited to share our Tapestry of Faith curricula and their own personal talents and gifts. The Religious Exploration Committee and I would like to welcome you to the delightful experience of Religious Exploration and Education at UUCW.

Here's to another joyful year of learning and growing together, knowing that each of us is wonderful drop in the large ocean of connection.

In Faith,

Robin Mitzcavitch



Director of Religious Exploration and Education

# From the Minister: What Stance Will You Take?

Beloveds,

My friend and colleague, John Morgan, once wrote about an encounter in Wales, a conversation with a resident there about the experience of feeling something strange while sitting under a particular tree. He learned in that encounter about “thin places. . . a sacred spot where you feel a presence so deep and mysterious that you have to stretch language to describe it.” (see *With or Without Candlelight: A Meditation Anthology*, ed. by Victoria Safford, Boston: UUA, Skinner House, 2009)

I know about this encounter, I’ve had many such moments of deep awareness, standing on grounds made sacred by the presence of those gone before, in spots that honor the work and sacrifice of those who have helped shape the life I lead and the world we live in; places which smelled familiar even though I had never been there before, places in which long dormant memories awakened and I became conscious of them again.

One such place is the sanctuary of the church I grew up in, one my father ministered in for 21 years. I have returned to it a few times since my family left Lancaster, PA. Once, while visiting it to plan my wedding, I remember thinking how small it was,

until I got down on my knees and there remembered why It loomed so large in my mind. But it wasn’t the vastness or contraction of the space there that moved me to tears. Instead, a flood of memories opened me up to that moment of sacredness; memories of childhood hiding places, memories of feeding the hungry, of playing in the recorder group, brass quartet, singing in the choir, pot luck dinners, watching real-to-real Disney movies with my playmates as our parents went to meetings, walking in the crop-walk to stop hunger, visiting people in nursing homes and hospitals, celebrating the lives of those who died, welcoming new babies and the span of my youth from playing baby Jesus to playing Joseph and all the angels, shepherds, wise people and animals in between. Moreover, I witnessed a church alive with meaning and purpose. As people practiced the art of justice, equity and compassion, the world I lived in opened up and I found my part in it. I was awakened to my own potential and that of community, as well as the world at large. Things did not have to be as they were. Change was possible, not that it always happened. What did happen, however, is that I was changed. I learned to be compassionate. I learned what justice could look like. I learned about

# From the Minister:

integrity, peace, and the acceptance of others for who they were, not who I thought they should or ought to be. In short, I learned how to love.

Thin places do this. They are the arenas in which our most sacred and significant values come alive. They are the spaces in which we encounter the sources of our strength and the edges of our growing. If we are open to the experience, they can be places of insight and transformation.

For me, this congregation and the sacred spaces that it crafts are these kinds of thin places. We gift each other, and especially our children, with the opportunity to regularly enter such spaces, to explore them deeply, to feel the power and potential of inner awakening, and to live our lives with justice, equity and compassion.

Join us this fall as we again craft sacred spaces so that we all might learn, live and lead lives that are inspiring, and thus take on the challenges of a changing world!

Blessings,

*Caron*



# RE Curricula for the Coming Year

**Our classes begin on September 24 and end with the RE Sunday Celebration on June 10**

## **Nursery (birth - age 3 1/2)**

Kris Johnson provides infant and childcare (ages 3 1/2 and below) during service every Sunday morning. Adult and teen volunteers assist Kris each week on a rotating schedule.

## **Spirit Play (Pre-K/Kindergarten)**

Spirit Play is a hands-on, multi-sensory curriculum based on the Montessori method. The program relies on central stories that share important UU and value-based themes, combines multiple ages, and utilizes child-centered space with many options for child-led work. This year we introduce a new set of stories and baskets.

## **\*Moral Tales (Grades 1 and 2)**

(Grades 1 and 2 will also do OWL in the Spring)

Moral Tales will:

Provide participants with an ethics- and faith-based framework for thinking about what it means to be just and good, introducing and reinforcing concepts such as interdependence, conscience, faith, empathy, forgiveness, compassion, awe, respect, non-violence, responsibility, courage, perseverance, cooperation, ecological

balance, fairness, and being welcoming.  
**Spirit Of Adventure (Grades 3 and 4)**

Spirit of Adventure teaches UU Identity with a different set of modalities and themes.

Modalities and themes include: sports, medicine, food, winter holidays, science, building, exploration, web of life

Each theme is connected to a UU source or principle or famous UU person.

Activities used to teach are different and adventurous- great for an active class and interactive fun.

## **\*Building Bridges- Adapted (Grades 5-7)**

This class will be focused on world religions and how the UU religion engages in the diversity. This curriculum will be adapted for a grades 5-7 and will include some field trips and guest speakers.

~Increase knowledge of religions practiced around the world and in local communities

~Understand how religion addresses basic human needs

~Fosters acceptance of the diverse forms that religious expression takes

~Build awareness of the diversity of followers within every faith;  
understand that to know someone's religious identity is not the same as knowing what that person thinks, believes, or practices  
~Support the faith development of participants  
~Empower youth to better appreciate human diversity and connect with others and be able to respectfully discuss important matters with people with whom they disagree  
Nurture open-mindedness and critical inquiry.

### **COA Grad class (Grades 8 and 9)**

Will be doing Teen OWL from Sept - Feb  
( after church 12-3 )

Also, they will be able to meet Sunday mornings as a part of

Rainbow R.A.T.S small group. all year with once a month gathering with Senior High Youth Group.

### **Youth Group (Grades 9-12) (COA grads grade 8 are also allowed to attend)**

Youth group meets most Sunday evenings from -6-8pm in fellowship hall.

Youth plan activities around 5 areas of interest

- 1) Outreach 2) Fun /Games 3) Education/Information 4) Worshipful Experiences
- 2) 5) UUCW community involvement / in-reach

\*Descriptions of these curricula are taken from the UUA website, Tapestry of Faith

### **O.W.L Our Whole Lives Grades 1 & 2, and 8 & 9**

We will be offering this human sexuality curriculum for grades 1 and 2, and also for Grades 8 and 9 this year.

OWL curricula provides honest, accurate information about sexuality as it applies and changes throughout our lives. It dismantles stereotypes and assumptions, builds self-acceptance and self-esteem, fosters healthy relationships, improves decision making, and has the potential to save lives. For these reasons and more, we are proud to offer Our Whole Lives, a comprehensive, lifespan sexuality education curricula for use in both secular settings and faith communities.

# UUCW Religious Exploration People

## **UUCW Professional Staff**

***Reverend Aaron R. Payson***  
Minister  
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***Robin Mitzcavitch***  
Director of Religious Exploration and  
Education (DREE)  
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***Matt Johnsen***  
Director of Music  
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***Jennifer Landry***  
Office Administrator  
*office@uucworchester.org*

***www.uucworchester.org***  
***(508) 853-1942***

## **2017-2018 Religious Exploration Committee**

***Claire Breyton***  
***Ana Gregory***  
***Lee Hill***  
***Vickie Cox-Lanyon***  
***Kim Napoleone***

# Sunday Mornings and Beyond

## Registration

We welcome visitors to our classrooms. All children and teens must be registered, and after three visits, registration is required for participation in the program. Registration forms are available at our web site ([www.uucworchester.org](http://www.uucworchester.org)) or from Robin or classroom teachers.

## We Begin in the Sanctuary

Parents are reminded that children older than the Nursery ***always*** begin Sunday in the sanctuary with their families. After the opening hymn they will be dismissed to go either to their classes accompanied by their teachers or to Fellowship Hall for children's worship. Childcare for ages 3 and under is provided for every service. Classes will be held unless otherwise announced.

## One-Room School House

One -Room School House is a special time where most children gather together in fellowship hall. One-Room experiences will reinforce children's sense of community and experience of being a spiritual person. This year, children of all ages will have the opportunity to work on projects together with teen mentors. These classes, led by Robin or the Religious Exploration Committee, will meet

approximately six times throughout the year . On these Sundays, regular Sunday School classes will not meet.

## After Church

Please pick up your children from their classrooms immediately following the service. Teachers are instructed to release children directly into the care of their parents only; if you need to make a different arrangement, please do so when you drop off your child before church.

*During Coffee Hour it is essential that parents supervise their children **both inside and outside** the building.* In order to satisfy safety and legal concerns, adults must be present if children play outdoors.

## Cancellations

In the event of severe weather, the decision to cancel church services and Religious Exploration classes will be made by 7 am and will be:

- placed on the church answering machine which can be accessed by dialing (508) 853-1942.
- sent out to the RE family email list
- placed on TV channel 4 and 5

- placed online at [www.thebostonchannel.com](http://www.thebostonchannel.com). People may sign up at this web site to have closing information delivered to them by either email or a cell phone text message.



## **Religious Exploration Email List**

Families on the RE email list will receive regular communication from classroom teachers via the DREE. If you do not wish to be a part of this year's RE communication list, please indicate that on your registration form. Through this list you will be reminded of upcoming events and things needed for class, and you will be notified in case of a cancellation. Families with email can expect to receive regular communication from classroom teachers about what is going on in class. Please use this information to begin conversations with your children.

# Special Programs and Events

## **One Room Experiences**

Children will spend approximately 7 classes with DREE Robin Mitzcavitch, the REC members, teens, and leaders in an interactive/ discovery classroom environment which is appropriate and meaningful for all ages. Weaving all ages together, we will discover that side-by-side learning and fun can always connect us to another.

## **Vespers Pageant**

All children will be able to participate in our Vespers Pageant. Robin and the REC will work with the group to prepare as we learn about the sacred celebrations of the winter season. Vespers will be at 4pm on December 17th.

## **Social Action and Community Service -**

During the year RE orchestrates many Social Action and Community Service opportunities that encourage our children and families to work together. In addition to our Thanksgiving food and toiletry drive and our Holiday Giving Tree, this year children and teens will undertake several other projects including a UNICEF Halloween carnival, ongoing collections for our Loaves and Fishes food pantry, hosting for Interfaith Hospitality families and participation

in mission trips. We will walk together in the CROP Walk in October and also the Walk for Homelessness in May. By working together to serve our community and to care for our environment, our children develop their skills and gain confidence in their ability to make a valuable contribution to the world. Participating in hands-on service projects gives all of us a chance to further develop friendships and to build a history together.

## **Multi-generational Activities**

The Crop Walk in October, Multi-gen worship services including a Vespers Pageant, a whole Church Read. These activities and more will weave young and old together throughout our church year.

## **High School Youth Group Welcomes teens in Grades 9-12**

High School teens are invited to attend Youth Group on Sunday evenings. Together they enjoy social activities, social action projects and worship opportunities. Youth Group gives our high school youth the opportunity to develop healthy peer and community relationships, foster leadership skills, participate in community service and outreach, and discover more deeply their personal convictions as they learn and grow together in a safe space.

Youth are welcome to bring a friend to Sunday night meetings; anyone who attends more than twice must register. Families who have not made a pledge to UUCW are asked to pay \$100 to help offset program costs. We ask each teen to pay a \$60 food fee (or \$ 10 per month) for the year.

### **Parenting Groups**

Please watch emails and church calendars.

**Adult Religious Education / Small Group Opportunities** Book clubs and discussion groups, task forces and more! Watch emails and church calendars.

# Keeping Everybody Safe

In accordance with the Safe Congregation policy approved by the UUCW Board of Management in 2007, the Religious Exploration Program screens all volunteers who work with children and youth through this church. All volunteers must submit a Volunteer Application form which includes a Voluntary Disclosure Statement as well as a list of references. In addition all volunteers are CORI-screened every three years and sign the Code of Ethics every year.

## RE Code of Ethics

The following Code of Ethics was adopted as policy by the Religious Exploration Committee and the Board of Management; all adults working with children agree to sign and abide by it:

### **Code of Ethics for Adults Working with Children and Youth in Church-Sponsored Programs**

Adults who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well-qualified to provide the special nurture, care and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

The relationship between young

people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential is to be realized. There are no more important areas of growth than those of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. Children, youth and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care. Therefore, leaders must refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with children or youth which constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.

Leaders shall be informed of the code of ethics and shall agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.



# RE Volunteer Job Descriptions

## **Religious Exploration Committee (REC)**

The REC is responsible for providing policy, planning, vision, and overview of the RE Program. One need not be a member of the REC to attend meetings, they are open to all and meet once per month usually following the service. Childcare is provided if needed.

## **Teachers and Classroom Assistants**

Each class is taught by a team of lead teachers. We are currently running between 4 and 5 lead teachers per class...teaching an average of 6 weeks each per year. Every week an assistant is also assigned to each class. As part of our teaching cooperative, assistants are comprised of parents and sometimes high school teens. Each parent that has been a part of our community for over 1 church year is asked to assist 3 days per year. We do this to ensure our classrooms are properly covered with 2 teachers per our Safe Congregations Policy. All teachers and assistants are CORI checked.

Lead teachers are responsible for preparing and teaching their lesson each week. Teachers are also responsible for communicating to the coordinator any supply needs and then following up with a written recap of the

lesson for parents.

Assistants are responsible for helping the lead teacher run the class activities.

## **Youth Group Advisors**

Advisors work with DREE to run the Sunday evening high school youth group. Advisors are often asked to accompany the group on outings, mission trips and lock-ins at the church. Advisors work on a rotating schedule all during the church year.

## **Parenting Group and Other Small Group Facilitator**

Facilitates a parenting group/small group with resourcing help from DREE and minister. Facilitator also will communicate dates, times, and themes with group members. Most groups will meet after church on a monthly basis. Child care will be provided if needed.

## **Nursery Coordinator**

Assists DREE with scheduling nursery coverage, supplies, clean-up crews, and communication.

# Our UU Seven Principles

## *WE BELIEVE*

1. That each being is important.
2. That every being should be treated fairly.
3. That faith community is a place of acceptance and growth.
4. That each person must be free to search for understanding for what is good and right.
5. That each person should have a vote for what concerns them.
6. That it is our task to make the world a place that is peaceful, fair, and free.
7. That we are responsible for caring for the environment– the interconnected web – of which we all are a part.

# Our UU Sources

## *OUR RELIGION DRAWS FROM MANY SOURCES*

- ⊕ The sense of awe and wonder that we all share.
- ⊕ Women and men of long ago and today — people whose lives remind us to be kind and fair.
- ⊕ The ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions.
- ⊕ Christian and Jewish teachings which tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.
- ⊕ The use of reason and the discoveries of science, the harmony of nature, and the sacred circle of life.

## Notes

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*“Inspiring people to take on the challenges of a changing world”*

If you have any questions or comments  
about our program please feel free to  
contact:

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