

ASCC
CHILDREN'S
RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION
PROGRAM 2008-09

*Navigating
Through a
Forest of
Beliefs:
Exploring
the Principles of Social
Justice and our Judeo-
Christian Heritage*



Welcome to All Souls Community Church's Children's Religious Education Program!

The vision of children's religious education at ASCC is to enable our children to make their own religious choices; to be comfortable in their own identities as individuals, as contributors to a Free Church Community and as Unitarian Universalists; and to be tolerant, respectful, and aware of their impact on others.

- **Your child will not be taught what to believe.**
We will help your child discern his or her own beliefs and learn to act on them.
- **Your child will be treated with respect.**
Everyone will have a chance to share and be heard.
- **Your child will learn about Christianity, Judaism, and other world religions.**
Important religious stories, holidays, and traditions are explored as sources of our faith.
- **Your child will be encouraged to explore different ideas.**
Children are safe to explore alternatives to dominant culture.
- **Your child will learn about ethics and morals.**
Our actions influence the world—we practice putting our values into action.

2008-09



Children's R.E. Theme

Navigating Through a Forest of Beliefs: Exploring the Principles of Social Justice and Our Judeo-Christian Heritage

The programming theme this year reflects the challenges our children face in our Judeo-Christian-dominated culture. While we do not, in our congregation, teach our children what to believe, we do intend to help them navigate their way through the various and disparate belief systems.

We aim to have our children become "culturally literate" in Judeo-Christian principles while gleaning the important moral lessons from time-tested tales. Furthermore, we will explore how our actions and attitudes influence the world around us by examining cultural diversity, social inequality, and personal relationships. We may never find our way completely out of this dense forest, but we will be walking together "in the ways of truth and affection" while we do it!

Also this year we are pleased to have our inaugural launch of the UUA's widely acclaimed comprehensive sexuality education program entitled: "Our Whole Lives" (or OWL for short). This program is for ages kindergarten to adult, but we will be using only the 7th-9th grade curriculum this year. For more information about this and all of the curricula, please see pages 11-15.

Our Principles and Sources

There are seven principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:

- 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.

Unitarian Universalism (UU) draws from many sources:

- 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 women and men which challenge us to confront powers & structures of evil with justice, compassion, & 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.

Important Information

Children's R.E. Programming Dates/Times

The CRE year runs Sept. 7 through June 7. Please see the CRE calendar for important dates. Be sure to check the "Weekly Expression" email newsletter; it will include information about special events and possible date or event changes. Classes are held concurrent with the adult service (which begins at 11am), but at times may go longer than the service. Please retrieve your child when his/her class is finished.

Visitors

Visitors are always welcome! A visitor card is available in each classroom; please fill it out so that we have basic knowledge of your child. After three visits, we request that you "officially" register your child.

Registration

Families must register children for each religious education year. Forms are available from the greeters in the lobby on Sunday mornings and from your children's teachers.

Volunteer Involvement

Our CRE program is a COOPERATIVE program; parents are expected to volunteer as a teacher, teacher's "helper", "Chalice Circle" leader, special events leader, etc. At the time of registration, we ask parents to indicate how they will be supportive of the program. Individuals without children in the program are also encouraged to serve as CRE volunteers! We'd love to know how you can share your talents with the children! *Note: Parent/Volunteer orientation will be held two different nights this year: September 22 and 23. If you miss orientation, please schedule a private session with the REC.*

Facility Information

Since we are the guests of Congregation Ahavas Israel, it is important that we respect their facility. We are especially mindful of keeping our snacks Kosher; this includes food and drink you bring from home. For more information about Kosher foods, see ChabadWestMichigan.com.

Financial Information

Since we are a cooperative church, we do not charge tuition. Occasionally, you will be asked to contribute a fee for a special outing. Your generous financial support will provide us with an adequate budget for the purchase of classroom supplies, materials, curricula, etc.!

“Safe Congregations” Policy

In 2006 the CRE Board created policies and procedures for keeping our children physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe. The new procedures include criminal background checks for religious education volunteers, periodic fire drills, and extra staffing during CRE programming. We will educate volunteers and staff about the new policy and procedures; the full policy is available upon request.

Behavior Policy

In order to facilitate the best possible experience for all of the ASCC children, the CRE Board has the following policy:

- If your child has any special needs with regards to behavior please inform the classroom teacher upon dropping your child off.
- Since all of our classroom teachers are volunteers who have willingly agreed to spend their time in the interest of creating an dynamic experience for children, we ask our CRE parents to review and reinforce the aspects of good classroom behavior which includes an emphasis on developing good (active) listeners, taking turns,

(continued next page)

showing respect for others (kids and adults), sharing and cleaning up after ourselves.

- If there is a situation where the child misbehaves in a manner that disrupts the class, hurts property or feelings of others, or uses inappropriate physical behavior or language, we will rely upon the classroom instructor to give 3 verbal warnings to the child before removing them from class. Please understand that as teachers we will make an effort to work with all different temperaments and try to explain the reason if not obvious to the child. In some situations it may be necessary to remove the child immediately.
- Whenever a child is removed from the classroom, the teacher will turn over the child to another RE volunteer who will alert one of the ushers in the sanctuary. An usher will then quietly as possible ask that parent to come to the lobby to meet with the child and the CRE volunteer. We hope parents understand why we might not turn an upset child loose into the sanctuary to find his or her own parents.
- We ask that parents do not drop off their children and then leave the premises without indicating to the classroom instructor who the responsible on-site adult is.
- With respect to having a positive experience for all we ask that parents of small children leave valuable toys at home and make sure their child is rested, fed and healthy. For older children we ask that all electronic devices except cell phones be left at home. We ask that cell phones are left off during instruction time.

It is our desire to create an atmosphere that enhances the spiritual growth of both our children and our adult volunteers and if for some reason there is any concern about our policy or your child's behavior, we will be willing to work further with any parent to reach that goal.

Children's Religious Education Calendar 2008-09

- Sept.** 7 Homecoming Sunday—all children in the first part of service--then go to classrooms
7 Homecoming Potluck and Children's Water Communion (following service)
14 Class
21 Class
22 Parent/Volunteer Children's R.E. Orientation, 7pm @ Ahavas' Meeting Room *
23 Parent/Volunteer Children's R.E. Orientation, 7pm @ Ahavas' Meeting Room *
28 Class
- Oct.** 5 Chalice Circle in Meeting Room (11:00-11:15) --then go to classrooms*
12 Class
19 Class
19 Family Hay Ride and Pizza Party (following service)
26 Halloween FUNDAY SUNDAY!
- Nov.** 2 Chalice Circle in Meeting Room (11:00-11:15)–then go to classrooms (Daylight Savings Time ends)
9 Class
16 Class
23 T-giving Festival—all children in first part of service, then go to Meeting Room for a "feast".
30 No Class—FUNDAY SUNDAY (Thanksgiving Break)
- Dec.** 7 Chalice Circle in Meeting Room (11:00-11:15)–then go to classrooms
13 Shop and Drop Babysitting Event (details forthcoming)
14 Class
21 No Class-(Intergenerational Christmas Service)
24 (Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 6pm)
28 No Class—FUNDAY SUNDAY (Holiday Break)
- Jan.** 4 Chalice Circle in Meeting Room (11:00-11:15)–then go to classrooms
11 Class
18 King Sunday—4th-12th in for all of service. Pre-3rd Grade Field Trip

- 11 Class
 18 King Sunday—4th-12th in for all of service, Pre-3rd Grade Field Trip
 27 Class
- Feb.** 1 Chalice Circle in Meeting Room (11:00-11:15)—then go to classrooms
 8 Lincoln Sunday—7th-12th in all of service, Pre-6th Grade go directly to class
 19 Class
 22 No Class— FUNDAY SUNDAY Winter Field Trip!
 1 Chalice Circle in Meeting Room (11:00-11:15)—then go to classrooms
 8 Class (Daylight Savings Time begins)
 15 Class
 15 Bowling Trip
 22 Class
 29 Class
- Apr.** (Look for your RE Surveys in the Weekly Expression this month!)
 5 NO CLASS (Spring Break)—Nature Walk/Bird Watching
 12 Easter—ALL children in first part of service, then go to Meeting Room for some fun!
 19 Class
 (RE Programming Retreat sometime in April)
 26 Class
- May** 3 Chalice Circle in Meeting Room (11:00-11:15)—then go to classrooms*
 10 Flower Communion—ALL children in for the entire service
 16 Volunteer Appreciation Party at The Rockford Community Cabin, Rockford, Michigan
 17 Class
 24 No Class—FUNDAY SUNDAY (Memorial Day Weekend)
 31 Class
- June** 7 End of Year Celebration
Events subject to change. Check Weekly Expression (email newsletter) for updated information.
 *snacks and child care provided

ASCC Children's Programming 2008-09



Nursery (Birth to 3 years)

Caregiver: Open

Our nursery provides a safe, child-friendly, supervised environment while parents are involved in other church activities. Toys, books, games, simple crafts and age-appropriate activities are provided. The nursery is supervised by a trained staff member who is assisted by a background-checked adult.

Preschool—Kindergarten (3 years through K)

Teacher: Jennica Meulenberg

Parent Team Leader: Rita Petteys

Preschoolers at All Souls are provided a wonderful experience through the curriculum ***Celebrating Me and My World***. Each session helps children identify with their classmates and religious community and affirm acceptance of one another, and nurtures spiritual and ethical growth. Unitarian Universalist principles and values that are implicitly promoted throughout the program include the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; and respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part.



Lower Elementary (1st -3rd Grades)

Team Leaders: *Lorrie Romesburg &
Melissa Papke*



Our 1st—3rd graders are in for a treat this year! ***Super Heroes-Bible People*** and ***Celebrating Family*** are new curricula with two very different goals:

Super Heroes-Bible People

In a world where so often "might makes right," and at an age when they are beginning to form values that will take them through their lives, your children will meet super heroes from the Bible who were, as the curriculum theme song states, "powerful with brains and even stronger in [their] heart[s]." The goals of *Super Heroes - Bible People* are: To introduce children to the stories of people from the Bible who have acted with courage and wisdom in their attempts to lead their lives fully and make the world a better place for others; to show how the lives of these people confirm the principles which we, as Unitarian Universalists, strive to promote; and to encourage the children to lead their own lives fully and to use their own positive "super powers" as they interact with the world around them, and as they do so, to grow both spiritually and ethically.

Celebrating Family explores concepts of family, including non-traditional family structures. It seeks to give each child a sense of belonging and a sense that his or her family is unique, precious, and as real as any other. The goals for participants are: To explore concepts of family; To understand that families have a variety of structures; To feel a sense of belonging to a family; To affirm one's own and others' families.

Upper Elementary (4th—6th Grades)

Team Leader: Kathryn VanOveren

The three curricula this year are:



Bibleodeon introduces Hebrew and Christian scriptures by presenting the best-known Hebrew and Christian stories with such props as Bibleodeon microphone and such interactive challenges as investigating the Cain-Abil crime scene. Participants act in dramatic playlets, illustrate a time line, keep doodle books, give awards to outstanding biblical women, and more. They explore connections between biblical events and UU principles, between biblical ideas and their own lives. They experience the Bible as one of the many wonderful UU sources.

Living the Promise is based on two interrelated scriptural themes: the development of monotheism and the meaning of covenant. Focuses on the major people and events of the Hebrew scriptures by portraying responsible, positive, and noble ways of life, and looks at how we view ourselves, others, and all of creation. Provides a Unitarian Universalist and humanist perspective on a cornerstone of Western religion--Judaism. Participants are encouraged to consider a "covenant of being"--a promise of goodness and opportunity that life should bring to all, as they answer such questions as "What is our part in such a covenant?" and "What would it mean to live responsibly within that vision?" Goals for Participants: To relate to their own lives the themes of ancient stories told from a UU and humanistic perspective; To explore responsible, positive, and noble ways to live by focusing on important ideas within Hebrew scripture.

Worth and Dignity of All People (see page 13-14 for description)

Junior High (7th—8th Grades)

Team Leader: Kim Waalkes

This class can expect to be engaged and challenged this year with the following three curricula:

How Can I Know What to Believe? This curriculum helps young people explore, formulate, and articulate their attitudes and beliefs about people in the Bible, God, death, and Unitarian Universalism. Explores humanist roots through the history of great ideas and the lives of Erasmus, the Buddha, Bertrand Russell, Margaret Sanger, and others. Goals for participants: To explore concepts about the Bible from a UU perspective; To express their beliefs about God; To probe concepts of death and dying; To explore UU Principles and exemplars; To examine and articulate their UU religious values and beliefs; To evaluate attitudes about human beings and their ability to live lives of goodness, cooperation, and justice.

Race to Justice promotes self-esteem, reduces prejudice, and affirms racial, ethnic, cultural, and familial diversity. Directly addresses the definition and nature of racism in age-appropriate ways, engages participants in hands-on activities, and builds community. Goals for participants: To promote self-esteem in a caring community; To understand racial justice and diversity issues through experiential learning exercises; To understand and affirm the value of multiculturalism; To see oneself and others as active agents for racial justice.



Worth and Dignity of All People is based on the first Principle--the inherent worth and dignity of every person--for grades 1 to 8. Themes include building a caring/

(continued next page)

(Worth and Dignity continued)

respectful group; understanding people with disabilities; understanding/overcoming racism, sexism, homophobia, and prejudice. Each theme is addressed in age-appropriate ways. Coals for Participants: To broaden understanding of the worth and dignity of every person; To value diversity; To feel empathy for others; To benefit from and contribute to a caring, respectful group.



**Junior High Special
Programming Jan—May 2009
*Our Whole Lives (OWL)***

Facilitators: Open

Our Whole Lives helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. It equips participants with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, *OWL* provides not only facts about anatomy and human development, but helps participants to clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality. For more information, see www.uua.org/owl



Youth Roots© (9th Grade)

Coordinator: Lisa Symons

All Souls' Youth Roots© 9th Grade program investigates our faith identity as Unitarian Universalists and is analogous to a Bat/Bar Mitzvah, First Communion, or Coming of Age program. Participants learn the theological ideas, rituals, communal characteristics, and historical development of Unitarian Universalism and our churches. Each month is devoted to exploring a different aspect of our faith. The class attends worship services at nearby Unitarian Universalist congregations, chooses a social justice project, and leads worship here. In the fall they go to Chicago and in the spring, Boston, to visit historic UU churches and sites.



Youth Group (10th—12th Grades)

Youth Advisor: Brittina DeHaan

Under the direction of their advisor, the youth group engages in a variety of meaningful activities, including social action projects, UUA youth conferences ("cons"), movie nights, and field trips! For example, last year they worked for Habitat for Humanity, attended Youth Chaplaincy training in Indianapolis, and had a "movie/Guitar Hero/ping-pong" party! Contact Brittina for more information: brittina@gmail.com



2008-09 Children's R.E. Board

Jeff Williams, *RE Board Chair*
241-6263
j3ffwi11iam5@gmail.com

Cindy Johnson 245-0386
cinkjo@comcast.net

Kim Waalkes 459-4081
kim_waalkes@yahoo.com

Tracie Coffman 257-3151
tcoffman@homerepairservices.org

Pam Stegink 246-6674
pstegink@yahoo.com

**Feel free to contact any of the RE Board members with questions, concerns, or ideas to help meet the developmental and spiritual needs of your children.*



The Great End of Religious Education

The great end of religious education 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 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.

-- William Ellery Channing