First Unitarian Society of Madison

Children’s Religious Exploration
Our UU Principles

The Seven Principles reflect our values and guide our behaviors as Unitarian Universalists: We believe in...

1st Principle
The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

2nd Principle
Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;

3rd Principle
Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

4th Principle
A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

5th Principle
The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

6th Principle
The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

7th Principle
Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

When we talk to our youngest kids about these ideas, we use a language more accessible to them. Our principles in “kid lingo” are:

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 perfect world
We care for earth’s lifeboat

Register online at www.fusmadison.org/cre/classes
Welcome from the CRE Team!

Welcome to our Children’s Religious Exploration (CRE) Program. We pride ourselves on offering a welcoming, supportive, progressive religious education for our children and we look forward to your family being a part of our “village.”

Our classes help children and youth to deepen their understanding of our UU faith, of their individual uniqueness, of the religiously diverse world in which we live, and of their responsibility to care for this magnificent earth we call “home.” More than anything, we want all children to feel welcomed here and to know in their bones that this is a safe place for them to explore and expand who they are. Fortunately, we have great curricula and committed adults to accompany them on their journey!

FUS boasts of having one of the three largest UU CRE programs in the country, closing each school year with over 300 enrollees. We cannot do this without the commitment and contributions of parents. All CRE parents are expected to volunteer in some capacity and that’s a win/win. Our program benefits by your time and talent, and hopefully your life is enriched by the connections you make along the way. Be sure to review the list of options and select volunteer opportunities that speak to your interests.

I’m looking forward to our time together this year. Please don’t hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Joyfully yours,

Leslie Ross
Director of Children’s Religious Exploration
leslier@fusmadison.org

Need help with registration? Contact our Religious Exploration Program Staff, Karen Anderson, at karena@fusmadison.org.

Many thanks to Catherine Hilcove Photography for contributing photos to this publication. www.catherinehilcove.com.
Who We Are

Unitarian Universalism affirms and promotes the Seven Principles listed on the inside cover of this brochure. They are grounded in the humanistic teachings of the world’s religions. We draw understanding and inspiration from scripture and science, nature and philosophy, personal experience, and ancient tradition. First Unitarian Society is made up of people of all walks of life who seek supportive fellow travelers to accompany them on their spiritual and ethical journey. Together we share a vision of a better world, and together we work toward that end. All of us agree that there is no single, superior path and that there are many possibilities to ponder and choose from. We choose to spend at least part of that journey together in community—singing, thinking, deepening, laughing and crying with the love and support of our fellow travelers. You can learn more about Unitarian Universalism at the website of the Unitarian Universalist Association, www.uua.org.

Our Program

We have a vibrant program for children from pre-school through 9th grade. Our classes meet during each of our worship times—Saturdays at 4:30 p.m. and Sundays at 9 and 11 a.m. Each week children pre-K through 7th grade start out in the Auditorium for a Message for All Ages before heading into their classrooms. This is a valued time for us to be together as a nearly whole congregation. Classes then end at 6 p.m. on Saturdays, 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. on Sundays. Our 8th and 9th graders go directly to class each week.

We strive to create a strong community within each classroom. We typically have two teachers and one parent helper at each class session to facilitate and support your child’s learning. Classes emphasize the power of the class community at least as much as the substantive curricular content. We hope this community helps your child(ren) feel cared for as they travel through their spiritual journey.
Our Hopes

Our CRE program facilitates ethical, social, and spiritual development in our children. We encourage kids to become free-thinking individuals who know and respect themselves and others, and who contribute to their human and natural communities.

**Our goals are to:**

- Create a feeling of community within the classroom and the congregation, promoting an experience of FUS as children’s spiritual “home.”
- Help children and youth understand the historical roots of UU and the contemporary expressions of our faith.
- Promote values that strengthen them to stand against all forms of prejudice and oppression.
- Develop respect for the interdependent nature of all existence.
- Inspire an appreciation for our Judeo-Christian heritage and the world’s other great religions.
- Guide and support children and youth in the development and expression of a personal faith.
- Encourage participants to act with integrity, responsibility, equity, and love.

Creating A Safe Place

It is important that together we do all we can to assure our children’s safety. We take several precautions toward that end.

**They include:**

- Conducting background checks on all our volunteer teachers, our child care coordinator, and youth advisors.
- Requiring that two adults be present with a child or group of children at all times.
- Requiring that our teens working in the child care program have all taken a babysitter’s certification class through the YMCA, Red Cross, or some other established program.
- Asking that parents of younger children (those in child care and in our pre-K through 1st grade classes) sign out their children when they pick them up at the end of class.

note to parents

Our children paint, run, play on the playground, dig in the dirt, and do other things that may get messy. Comfortable and casual clothing is encouraged! Also, parents are required to stay on the premises while their children are in class.
how classes work

For the 2021/2022 school year, Saturday classes will begin on September 11; Sunday classes will begin on September 12.

YEARY ROTATIONS

Our pre-K – 5th grade classes combine two grade levels and rotate each year. Roughly speaking, every other year your child will have a class that focuses on Unitarian Universalism and the values expressed in our seven principles. On opposite years we offer a class that otherwise expresses our principles and priorities. Our classes for 6th – 9th grades are consistent from one year to the next. You will find detailed descriptions of this year’s classes on pages 7 – 11 of this booklet.

2021/2022 YEAR

- Celebrating Me & My World (pre-K)
- Experiences with the Web of Life (K-1st gr.)
- Holidays and Holy Days/Moral Tales (2nd–3rd gr.)
- Bibleodeon (4th-5th gr.)
- Building Bridges (6th & 7th gr. Sat. and Sun. @ 11 a.m.; 6th gr. only on Sun. @ 9 a.m.)
- Compass Points (7th gr. Sun. @ 9 a.m.)
- Mind, Body & Soul (8th gr., Sat. and Sun. @ 9 a.m.)
- Coming of Age (9th gr., Sat. and Sun. @ 9 a.m.)

2022/2023 YEAR

- Chalice Children (pre-K)
- Treasure Hunting (K-1st gr.)
- Free to Believe (2nd-3rd gr.)
- Exploring Our Origins (4th-5th gr.)
- Building Bridges (6th gr., Sat. and Sun. @ 9 a.m.)
- Compass Points (7th gr. Sat. and Sun. @ 9 a.m.; 6th and 7th gr. Sun. @ 11 a.m.)
- Mind, Body and Soul (8th gr., Sat. and Sun. @ 9 a.m.)
- Coming of Age (9th gr., Sat. and Sun. @ 9 a.m.)

how to register

You can register online at www.fusmadison.org/cre/classes. If you have questions about registering, please contact Karen Anderson.
for 3 & 4 year olds

CELEBRATING ME & MY WORLD
Celebrating Me & My World invites children to celebrate what is wonderful about themselves and the world around them. It encourages the development of a positive self-image, feelings of comfort and safety here at FUS, familiarity with the basics of our classroom rituals, and the development of cooperative skills that make for a happy group experience.

CHALICE CHILDREN
Chalice Children helps children learn about our faith community, celebrate the friendships they have here, and inspire their curiosity about the world around them. We’ll indulge their wonder about the stars, moon, rainbows, and more. During Teddy Bear month, they will help their bears make friends, nurture them when they’re sick, and help them to not be afraid.

for Kindergarten& 1st graders

EXPERIENCES WITH THE WEB OF LIFE
With this class we celebrate our 7th UU principle, “Respect for the interdependent web of life of which we are a part.” Children will observe the ways that living things relate to the rest of life. At the start of the year, each class picks a special spot outside to observe throughout the year. They’ll learn about bats and prairies, worms and trees, and so much more! Our spiritual connection with all living things and our important jobs as stewards of the earth are reinforced throughout.

TREASURE HUNTING
Treasure Hunting is inspired by the fun and excitement of true treasure hunts, but in this class it’s an understanding and appreciation for ourselves and our world that we search for. We’ll introduce the basic tenets of UUism and its principles. Each week children will make a “treasure” to add to their treasure chest of learning. Through games, stories, song, and crafts, the treasures of self-esteem, community, religion, and nature are celebrated.

Register online at www.fusmadison.org/cre/classes
for 2nd & 3rd graders

HOLIDAYS AND HOLY DAYS/MORAL TALES
The first half of the year we’ll use the curriculum Holidays and Holy Days. Each week is a celebration of a religious or cultural holiday from throughout the world: Ramadan, Sukkot, Buddha’s Birthday, Kwanzaa, and more. Our UU values are explicitly related to the many religious and cultural traditions celebrated here.

The second half of the year we’ll use the curriculum Moral Tales. Moral Tales attempts to provide children with the spiritual and ethical tools they need to make choices and take actions reflective of their Unitarian Universalist beliefs and values. Each session has a central story in which participants meet real and fictional heroes and heroines who have displayed moral courage and spiritual greatness. We’ll explore how they can do the same in their lives as well!

FREE TO BELIEVE
In Free to Believe we’ll use our UU principles as starting points for exploring values, beliefs, and what it means to be a UU. What does it mean to be kind and respectful and to work toward peace and justice? How do we live our UU principles? They’ll explore some of life’s “big questions” through the lens of Unitarian Universalism’s sources. The class will also learn about our Partner Church Program; our “partner” is in Nagyajta, Romania.

for 4th & 5th graders

BIBLEODEON
Participants are introduced to biblical scriptures by presenting the best-known Hebrew and Christian stories with fun and interactive games, such as investigating the Cain and Abel crime scene, learning about famous women in the Bible, and solving the “Mystery of the Day.” They explore connections between biblical events and UU principles, between biblical ideas and their own lives.

EXPLORING OUR ORIGINS
Exploring our Origins provides children the intellectual and spiritual space to develop a sense of their own place within the cosmic narrative of the universe and life on Earth. They’ll explore the wonders and mysteries of life on Earth through the lenses of both science and reverence and come to understand themselves as part of a much larger natural history that began with the birth of the universe.
Register online at www.fusmadison.org/cre/classes

for 6th (& sometimes 7th) graders

BUILDING BRIDGES

Building Bridges is a world religions program that deepens youth’s understanding of the diverse world in which they live. It seeks to broaden their knowledge of humanity and embolden their spiritual search. During the year they will explore the beliefs and rituals that are the pillars of Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and more. We welcome people from other faiths to share their beliefs with us, and we visit numerous places of worship outside of FUS. Some flexibility in scheduling is required to accommodate these visits.

for 7th (& sometimes 6th) graders

COMPASS POINTS

Compass Points is a UU curriculum that leads middle schoolers on a journey of thought and spirit. Each direction points to a leg of the journey that is life, helping us to engage our spiritual and questioning selves in ways that deepen our appreciation for our own gifts, for others, and for our rich and dynamic UU history. Each week participants “take a stand” on an ethical or philosophical issue, delve into that issue more deeply, and then re-visit their “stand.” Included in our topics are concepts of religious authority, dying and living, religious freedom, our UU ancestors, and how we “walk the talk.”
for 8th graders

MIND, BODY & SOUL

What would it mean for adolescents to approach their relationships and sexual lives with an understanding of who they are, mind, body and soul? Our Mind, Body & Soul class draws from multiple sources and offers a progressive and comprehensive sex education curriculum that puts sexuality firmly within the context of relationships. Our goal is to create a safe community where teens can honestly discuss sensitive issues that profoundly affect them. You’re not likely to find a more comprehensive sex education for youth than this! Regular attendance is imperative to create and sustain a trusting bond and to most benefit from the lessons. A parent orientation will be held prior to the first class.

The range of topics is wide, including these as well as others:
- How our social, mental, physical, and emotional needs inform our sexual decisions
- The complexity of gender identity, biological sex, and sexual orientation
- The emotional and physical risks of sexual behaviors
- The influence of media on our developing concepts of sexuality
- Body image and assumptions about others
- Communication skills

During the year we are visited by Planned Parenthood and the Rape Crisis Center. We also visit a pediatrician who specializes in adolescent health. Each week participants are given the opportunity to ask confidential questions so that we know they are getting all the information they need and want.
for 9th graders

COMING OF AGE

Coming of Age is a program that honors our teens as spiritual seekers and celebrates the significant passage from childhood to adolescence. During the year, teens strive to define who they are and what they believe. They grapple with some of life’s “big questions” and learn life skills that help them to live a healthy life – spiritually, emotionally, and socially. The year’s program includes two weekend retreats, class activities and discussions, time spent with “elders,” and more. Each participant develops a “This I Believe...” statement that they then present at the Coming of Age worship service in May.

Participation in Coming of Age involves a significant commitment from parents and youth. Weekly attendance is very important and several events require participation. These include the Fall and Spring retreats, the opening and closing ceremonies, and the Coming of Age worship service. If you have not attended an orientation for the Coming of Age program (all 8th graders and their parents are invited to this in the spring), then be sure to talk with our Director of Children’s Religious Exploration before enrolling.
we need you!

We could not have the “village” we have without help from all of our families. Parents are needed in several ways...

YOUR FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

A quality religious exploration program can be expensive. Our yearly budget for child care, classes, and activities for children and youth is about $400 per child—well above the fee that we charge. Families participate without charge in child care and our Summer Fun program. First year participants in our CRE program pay a fee per class but are not required to make a pledge of support to the congregation. We want you to have the year to determine whether or not FUS feels right as your family’s spiritual home. After the first academic year, participants are required to make a yearly pledge as well as pay class fees. These pledges help support the overall operating expenses of FUS. Select a pledge amount that feels right for your family’s resources. Our annual pledge campaign starts in March each year, but you can make a contribution any time or learn more about giving at FUS by visiting www.fusmadison.org/giving. Your pledge can be paid in monthly installments through automatic withdrawals.

YOUR PRESENCE

Your children learn about the importance of their religious community from you. We hope that you can make weekly attendance at RE classes a priority for your family and that you yourself will find ways to engage with FUS. We want FUS to be your family’s spiritual home, not just a place for your kids! By being here regularly, your child will feel comfortable and safe here and will make meaningful connections with other children and adults. Chances are you will too!

YOUR HELP

All households with children registered in children’s religious exploration are expected to volunteer in some way toward the success of our programs for children and youth. We have many needs and limited staffing, so your help is essential. Please review the list starting on the next page. It’s important that you give this careful consideration so that your volunteer commitment is realistic for you and is something you are able to fulfill. We truly count on you doing your part!

Register online at www.fusmadison.org/cre/classes
volunteer opportunities for parents

TEACHING

Most of our classes are taught by a team of four volunteer teachers. Each week, one teacher has the responsibility of being the “Community Lead,” helping the class community to be strong and leading the class in its weekly rituals. The other teacher is the “Curriculum Lead” and has the responsibility of facilitating that week’s content and activities. (For most of our classes, weekly parent helpers are on hand as well.) Our teachers are in the classroom roughly twice per month, mid-September through mid-May. Our classes use a provided curriculum that outlines what will be taught from week to week. Volunteer teachers are our greatest need; please consider making this your volunteer choice! (NOTE: teachers for Mind, Body & Soul and Coming of Age are by invitation only. If you have an interest in teaching either of these classes, please contact our Director of Children’s Religious Exploration to set up a meeting.)
CLASSROOM SUPPORT COORDINATOR
Classroom Support Coordinators (CSCs) are needed for each class. CSCs have different roles, depending on the class. Most CSCs schedule weekly parent helpers. Other roles may include planning social outings, or other things to support class activities. All coordinate “thank you” gifts for teachers at the end of the year.

FAITH IN ACTION COORDINATOR
Our K-8th grade classes all participate in Faith in Action activities twice per year. Through Faith in Action, we “live” our UU principles and strive to “make the world a better place.” Faith in Action include things like preparing a meal for individuals experiencing homelessness, making items to sell at the Occupy Madison’s Tiny Homes site, serving ice cream at the Veterans Hospital, and more.

RE TABLE GREETER
Life at the RE Table gets pretty busy before services begin. New families want to visit classrooms, teachers need additional supplies, someone wants more information about our program...there’s always something! The RE Table Greeter will assist RE staff by signing in visitors and showing them the classes they will visit that day, as well as other tasks that may be needed. They are expected to help out at one service each month, starting 15 minutes before service begins and staying through the Message for All Ages. RE Greeters serve from mid-September through mid-May.

INCLUSION BUDDY
It is our hope that children of all abilities will participate in our children’s programs. Some of our children benefit from having special assistance in the classroom—someone who can focus on their needs and best strategies for their involvement. (The time commitment involved will depend on our number of volunteers but is not likely to exceed attending two classes per month.)

CRE MINISTRY TEAM
The CRE Ministry Team serves from June through May and has several tasks in its portfolio. They may help organize our yearly Teacher Tuesday training (October) and Religious Exploration Appreciation Dinner (February). They may also be asked to help with teacher recruitment, assuring that we are adequately “staffed” to meet the number of CRE enrollees we have each year. And they welcome our new CRE families through phone calls and other efforts.

SUMMER VOLUNTEERS
Summer is a busy time for us and we need your help. Summer Volunteers help us to get materials ready for classrooms, organize our supplies, and more!
other fun opportunities for kids

CHILD CARE
We have child care available for infants and toddlers during each of our worship services and during many parish events. We also have Baby Haven, a soundproof room located at the back of the Atrium Auditorium that allows parents to enjoy Sunday worship services while tending to their young children. We ask that parents register their infant/toddler for child care even though there is no fee for this. Your registration helps us assure adequate coverage. For more information, go to www.fusmadison.org/childcare.

CHILDREN’S CHOIRS
We have several children’s choirs (determined by age) offering a special opportunity for children and youth to use their gift of music to serve our congregation. Our choirs are a strong and vibrant part of our community. They meet at various times on Wednesday evening. Please go to www.fusmadison.org/music/choirs.

SUMMER FUN
When our RE classes have ended for the year (mid-May), our Summer Fun program kicks in! Summer Fun is for children ages 4-12 and is available during both Sunday services. There is no fee or registration required. Just show up, sign in, and join the fun!

YOUTH GROUP
High schoolers are welcome to attend our Youth Group, which meets Sundays from 4-6 p.m. during the school year. Our youth program creates opportunities for teens to deepen their ties to our faith communities and to live out our UU principles. Join them for fun, time with friends, and lively discussion. For more information, go to www.fusmadison.org/youth.

OTHER FUN ANNUAL EVENTS FOR KIDS:
• Our family-friendly Gingerbread House Festival held in December
• Our class Banner Parade held in January
• Our Easter Egg Hunt

Register online at www.fusmadison.org/cre/classes
We light this chalice to celebrate Unitarian Universalism.

This is the church of the open mind.

This is the church of the loving heart.

This is the church of the helping hands.

Together we care for our Earth,

And work for peace and friendship in our world.