

LIFESPAN FAITH



DEVELOPMENT



**RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION
FOR CHILDREN
& YOUTH**

**PROGRAM GUIDE
FALL 2009**

ONE CHURCH  MANY PATHS
West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church

West Shore Mission Statement

West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church exists to inspire more people to live lives of meaning and purpose. We do this through transformative worship, lifespan faith development, inclusive community, service to church and community and spreading the news.

Our Philosophy of Lifespan Faith Development

Our Religious Education Program provides a community where children and adults can explore together the great religious questions of humanity. The Unitarian Universalist approach is unique in that it focuses on human and spiritual values rather than a creed, thus providing thoughtful assistance as each child develops an individual concept of his or her place in the world.

Each curriculum has a special focus, but there are recurring themes throughout. Children are able at different ages to deal with different aspects of the same topics—birth, death, values, emotions, environmental concerns, biblical stories, sexuality, our Jewish and Christian heritages, world religions and many more.

A child's religious education is a great responsibility, one that is shared by parents and the church. Our teachers, all volunteers, bring to the classroom their diverse backgrounds, ages and life experiences. We urge you to participate.



Professional Leadership

Kathy Strawser, Director of Lifespan Faith Development



English from Kent State University. She taught for thirty years in the Berea City Schools. Team teaching, curriculum writing, and mentoring new teachers were her key responsibilities outside

the classroom. At West Shore, Kathy has served on the Board of Trustees and the Senior Choir. This is her sixth year as Director of Lifespan Faith Development. In our Ohio-Meadville district, she has co-led the Lifespan Faith Development Committee and serves as chapter president of the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA).

“Eighteen years ago my family searched for a church that could help us introduce our three year old to things spiritual, a place where she would learn a variety of religious traditions, actively use her mind as part of her faith, and demonstrate her convictions in her actions. We wanted her Sunday School teachers to reflect our own liberal religious beliefs, and we hoped for a sense of family, since most of our relatives were hours from our home. The West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church community gave all this and more. This gift to families is what I think of when I consider what is most important for a Unitarian Universalist Lifespan Faith Development program to offer.”



Welcome



West Shore UU Church welcomes all families to our faith community. Our church has been the spiritual home for many interfaith couples. As a recognized “Welcoming Congregation,” we value and promote our bi-sexual, gay, lesbian and transgender parents and family members.

A growing number of grandparents seeking and supporting a UU religious education for their grandchildren encourages us to be committed to creating a truly intergenerational church community. We welcome you!

Frequently Asked Questions

We’d like to visit the church with our children. Should we sign up?

We’d love to have you visit. If you’re able to call or email (kstrawser@wsuuc.org), we can take time to help you prepare your children for their Sunday experience and can also prepare a warm welcome. If you’re not able to call ahead, we’d still love for your family to join us. Your family can attend the sanctuary worship together on the first Sunday you visit, or if you wish, children are welcome to attend a Sunday School class. Nursery care is also available for infants-24 months. We ask that you complete a visitor card at the Religion Education table, and encourage you to leave your cell phone/pager number with your children’s teacher/childcare giver.

When is the religious education hour for children and youth?

We offer two sessions, 9:30 – 10:40 and 11:15 – 12:25. Our sanctuary services end at 10:30 and 12:15, which gives parents some brief time to socialize before they pick up their children from class.

How do I register my child for Sunday School?

Registration forms are available at the Religion Education table in the church rotunda. We ask that you register for the 9:30 or the 11:15 session,

Frequently Asked Questions, cont.

but understand you may need to attend the other session from time to time. The classes and curriculum are identical for both sessions. You will be asked to provide information regarding any “special needs” and health insurance on the registration form. Your answers help us to provide the best and safest learning opportunities for your children.

What safety procedures are in place to protect children and youth who attend your Sunday School?

West Shore Church has a board approved safety policy for children and youth. The Religious Education Committee determines the procedures to support the policy. We require adult volunteers who work with children and youth to complete an application, sign a code of ethics, provide references and submit information and consent for a mandatory background check. All classrooms have two adults present at all times, and safety procedures are in place. West Shore Church practices an all-church fire drill each fall. Further requirements regarding transportation of children and youth, activities at church and off-site, etc., are stated in our Safety Policy and Procedures document.

These procedures are posted on the church bulletin board and on our website at <http://www.wsuuc.org/religious-education/documents/SafetyPolicy-Website.pdf>. For a printed copy, please contact the church office or the Director of Lifespan Faith Development. The procedures reflect the policies of the Ohio-Meadville District and apply to all West Shore Unitarian Universalist and Ohio- Meadville sponsored events in which children and youth are present, such as events sponsored by the Religious Education Committee, YAC (Youth/Adult Committee) sponsored events and Youth Caucus at the O-MD Annual Meeting.



Frequently Asked Questions, cont.

Is there a religious education fee?

We charge no fee for our program, as parents are expected to make a financial pledge to the church. We strongly encourage members and friends to make a contribution of record, meaning they identify any money they give to the church. Doing this identifies you as a parent who supports the church budget and values its funding of our religious education program for children and youth, and it allows the church to aid you for tax deduction purposes. It is our expectation that parents will ensure their children's consistent church attendance and they will contribute at least one year of service to the religious education program for each child enrolled in the church school.

What opportunities do children and youth have to learn about and to practice worship?

All of our children and youth, even our toddlers, recognize the flaming chalice, the symbol of our free faith, and the age-appropriate, chalice lighting ritual begins or ends every Sunday School session. Children in Grades K-6 attend Children's Chapel, a worship service of song, story, offering, discussion and silence, for part of one Sunday School each month. Third and fourth graders serve as chalice lighters for all sanctuary services. Our Coming of Age class (Grades 7-8) and/or our Junior Church (Grades 9-12) create(s) the congregational worship service once each year. One Sunday each month school-age children attend the entire sanctuary worship service with their family and friends. The intergenerational service's sermon and liturgical elements are intentionally created and selected to respect and engage the range of ages within our faith community.

What opportunities do children and youth have to practice social action, to learn about giving to the community and to the world?

Our first and seventh principles, that we affirm and promote "the inherent worth and dignity of every person," and "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part," compel us to teach the value of social action. All our curricula support "walking the walk." To that end, our children give to a monthly, Children's Chapel offering that has

Frequently Asked Questions, cont.

funded bag lunches and toiletry kits for Cleveland's Homeless Standdownart supplies for children in Chernobyl hospitals, and care packages for U.S. soldiers stationed in Kuwait and Iraq. In addition, individual classes have made and sold dog biscuits to support a local animal shelter, completed litter drives and collected children's books for Cleveland-area community clinics and centers. Our youth have hosted a night for the Interfaith Hospitality Network, and spent a February night on the church lawn to raise awareness and funds for two organizations that support the homeless. West Shore Church has a long tradition of participation in the UUA Service Committee's Guest at Your Table, a month-long collection for international, emergency relief, and the Giving Tree, an in-house collection of Christmas presents for women and children living in shelters, through the Cleveland Center for Domestic Violence.

What is *OWL*?

OWL is the acronym for *Our Whole Lives*, a lifespan human sexuality education program built upon a core of UU values. We now have trained facilitators for Kindergarten-Grade 1, Grades 5-6, Grades 7-9, and Grades 10-12 *OWL* curricula. This program includes the dimension of spirituality and ethics, encouraging children and youth to deepen their faith and live out their values. Parental permission and attendance at an orientation session are required. This church year, we offer *OWL*, Grades 7 – 8, once a month, outside of Sunday School class time. For more information, download the [*OWL Frequently Asked Questions*](#) brochure on our website.

West Shore's Curriculum

"... We want our children to have a quality, liberal religious education. We believe our children receive that at West Shore..."



Nursery

Hailey Rinaldo, a 5-year West Shore Child Care Center veteran with an associate's degree in Early Childhood Education, provides care for our youngest children, ages infant to two years. She has training in CPR, communicable diseases, abuse awareness and first aid, for children and infants. Parents may remain in the nursery with their infants and listen to the service over the room's PA system. We ask parents to please provide bottles, diapers and wipes, and to leave their cell phone/pager numbers with the childcare giver. If parents choose, they may go with their infant to the Rotunda Lounge next to the sanctuary, where the service is presented over closed circuit television.

Twos and Threes

Friendship Finders is a Unitarian Universalist theme curriculum celebrating self, sharing, family, friends, feelings, nature and seasons. Lessons are intentionally repeated and include a welcome, chalice "lighting," sharing circle, UU affirmation, theme-related picture books, songs, game and/or activity, and closing circle. Our main goal is for these young children to know church as a safe and fun place to be.

Pre-Kindergarten

We Are Many, We Are One is based on the

through relationships. Questions such as, "Who am I," and "How do I treat other people," are religious questions that children begin to answer as they become acquainted with themselves, other people and their environment. The children will also learn about major celebrations of the world's cultures.

West Shore's Curriculum

Kindergarten – Grade 2

Spirit Play, a Unitarian Universalist curriculum and teaching model based on the Montessori method, is story-based and teaches our seven principles, six sources, history and timeless themes. Each lesson includes a coming together time, story, wondering questions, work time, feast and goodbye. Every lesson is taught with manipulatives and every work time includes an array of choices for each child. The class offers children a chance to slow down enough to learn how to be still, and how to listen to their inner lives.

Grades 3 – 4

Timeless Themes introduces children to the stories of the Hebrew Bible. Through drama, crafts and music, the stories are repeated in many ways, helping children to understand one aspect of their own heritage as Unitarian Universalists, as well as the sources of many of the values of our society. The focus of the curriculum is on the “timeless themes” of the Bible, such as the belief in God, the love of freedom and prophetic voices.

Grades 5 – 6

World Religions is a two-year curriculum that actively engages young people in the exploration of the beliefs and practices of several different religious traditions. This year the class will primarily explore two, eastern religions, Hinduism and Buddhism. The students will also engage in Islam and African religions. The second year (‘10—11) focuses on early expressions of Unitarian Universalism, including our roots in Transylvania, Judaism and Christianity. Field trips, symbol-making, the practice of meditation, and discussion of the holy-days of various traditions expand the religious understandings of students and contribute to their own developing Unitarian Universalist beliefs.

West Shore's Curriculum

Grades 7 - 8

Popcorn Theology explores issues of theology and ethics through film. Seventh and eighth graders discover their thoughts about choices, consequences, truth, meaning, conscience and faith. Every lesson features a film excerpt, active/physical response and reflection.

Child Care Policy

West Shore is committed to maintaining a safe *and inclusive* congregation for children, youth and adults. *We are obligated to insure* safety and accountability when hiring childcare providers. We conduct background checks and require two providers to be in the childcare space at all times.

West Shore *guarantees* quality childcare at major church events *and will arrange it for other programs on request and within certain limits*. We routinely *arrange and pay for* childcare at major all-church events, such as the Stewardship Lunch/Dinner, the Annual Meeting, the Service Auction and Congregational Conversations.

A minimum of four children is required to provide childcare for the *monthly* "Path to Membership" class and *any other class, workshop, meeting or event not mentioned above*. That said, staff and budget limitations mean that we cannot guarantee childcare for every church event, program or activity beyond the ones specifically named above. Finally, we ask for one-week advance notification of childcare needs for all events not specifically covered. Pre-registration is required.

Classes & Programs for Grades 9 - 12

On the Path: Class meets at 9:30

On the Path explores the nature and meaning of spirituality in the lives of youths. In addition, youth learn leadership skills through service projects and the creation of the Youth Sunday Service for the congregation in late spring.



Youth Internship:

Programs at 11:15

High school youth may attend the sanctuary worship or choose to serve the church as greeters, ushers, social hour hosts, tech support, choir members, teachers' aides and office volunteers. Youth Ministry Coordinator Linda New matches the youth to internships.

We expect our youth to actively consider church membership when they reach sixteen years of age. Kathleen Heck, Membership Coordinator, can explain the process of full membership to interested youth.

Linda New, Youth Ministry Coordinator

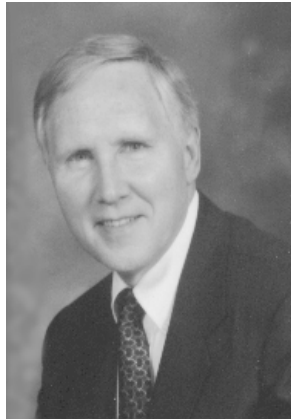
A church member, mother of two high school teens, and Brecksville-Broadview Heights high school special education teacher, Linda demonstrates a growing interest in Unitarian Universalism, solid experience in volunteer work with community youth, and well developed organizational and communication skills. Her position links our youth, their parents and church youth advisors, as well as connections to district, denominational and interfaith opportunities. Linda is the key staff member for high school youth, as a volunteer in the 9:30 class, as well as the lead for 11:15 youth service internships.

Special Opportunities

Junior Choir

10:40 - 11:15 a.m. Sunday mornings

We invite and encourage children in **Grades 1 - 8** to join the Junior Choir, led by Joe Schafer. Using much of Joe's original work, the children sing songs that affirm and articulate their own search for truth, kindness, and learning. The choir practices every week before church school. They perform for intergenerational services, children's worship services, Christmas Eve family service, and by invitation at various places within the community and Ohio-Meadville district. The Junior Choir's most recent songbook/CD, *Time for Singing*, was produced in spring 2006.



*Joe Schafer
Junior Choir Director*



Chalice Lighters

We encourage children in **Grades 3 - 4** to volunteer to participate in this program to become more familiar with Unitarian Universalist principles and to learn our key ritual, lighting the chalice. Parents, children, ministers and the LFD director meet twice for an informal dinner and meeting to receive a notebook, complete a related craft, and practice lighting the chalice. In between the two gatherings, parents work with their children in answering the questions and completing the exercises in a notebook. Children who complete the process will take an active role in an initiation and in lighting the chalice during the year's worship services.



West Shore's Lifespan Faith Development Program

is a place to:

- Develop a deeper understanding of liberal religion;
- Explore a variety of spiritual practices;
- Engage in a justice-seeking community;
- Learn about the world's religious traditions;
- Learn something new about yourself.



Religious Education Programming - Fall

Activity	Time
Sunday School (<i>Classrooms</i>)	9:30 & 11:15 a.m.
Junior Choir (<i>Chapel</i>)	10:40 - 11:15 a.m.
Children's Chapel, Grades K-6 (<i>Chapel</i>)	9:30 & 11:15 a.m.
Intergenerational Service* (<i>Sanctuary</i>)	9:30 & 11:15 a.m.

August 30

Intergenerational Service*
In-Gathering Water Communion

September 6

Intergenerational Service*
Teacher Dedication in Sanctuary

September 13

Junior Choir
Sunday School

September 20

Junior Choir
Sunday School

September 27

Junior Choir
Sunday School

October 4

Junior Choir
Children's Chapel
Sunday School

October 8

Chalice Lighters, 5:30 - 7:00

October 11

Junior Choir
Sunday School

October 18

Junior Choir
Intergenerational Service*

October 22

Chalice Lighter, 5:30 - 7:00

October 25

Junior Choir
Sunday School

October 30

Day of the Dead Celebration,
5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

November 1

Junior Choir
Children's Chapel
Sunday School

November 8

Junior Choir
Sunday School

November 15

Junior Choir
Sunday School

November 22

Junior Choir
Intergenerational Service*

November 29

Advent Workshop*

December 6

Junior Choir
Children's Chapel
Sunday School

December 13

Junior Choir
Sunday School

December 20

Junior Choir
Intergenerational Service*

December 24

Christmas Eve Family Service
5:00

* Childcare offered for ages infant – Pre—K.



Unitarian Universalist Principles

We covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations.
- Free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
- Right of conscience and the use of democratic process.
- 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.

Children's UU Principles

We believe that:

- Each and every person is important.
- All people should be treated fairly and kindly.
- We should accept one another and keep on learning together.
- Each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.
- All persons should have a vote about the things that concern them.
- We should work for a peaceful, fair and free world.
- We should care for our plant Earth, the home we share with all living things.

West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church

**The living tradition which
we share 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 and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and 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.

The Reverends Kathleen C. Rolenz and Wayne B. Arnason, Parish Co-Ministers
Kathleen K. Strawser, Director of Lifespan Faith Development

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