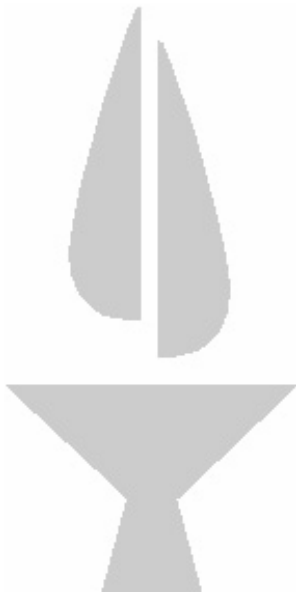


LIFESPAN FAITH



DEVELOPMENT



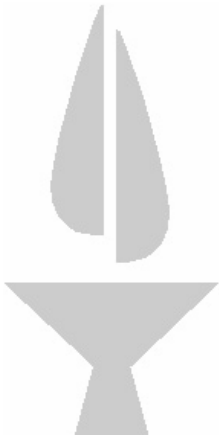
**RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION
FOR CHILDREN
& YOUTH**

**PROGRAM GUIDE
WINTER/SPRING
2009**

ONE CHURCH  MANY PATHS
West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church

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

Kathy grew up in Columbus, Ohio, and has a B.A. and M.A. in



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 fifth 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).

“Seventeen 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.”



General Information

CHURCH SCHOOL

Church School sessions are held on Sunday, from September through May, during worship service time at 10:30 a.m. An intergenerational social hour follows the service.

WORSHIP

Intergenerational Worship in the Sanctuary

One Sunday each month school-age children attend the Worship Service with their family and friends in the main sanctuary. The service's sermon and liturgical elements are intentionally created and selected to respect and engage the range of ages within our faith community.

Children's Worship in the Chapel

Monthly worship services are held in the chapel for elementary age children. Children's Worship provides an experience with ritual, the establishment of a community, and an opportunity to explore individual, spiritual paths. The theme for Children's Worship coincides with the theme of the adult worship for that month.

Registration: Parents/guardians should register children yearly at the Religious Education table in the church rotunda by the first Sunday they attend. Our program requires completion of registration and emergency medical forms.

Enrichment: The curriculum extends beyond Sunday morning classes. Enrichment activities include fall, winter and spring events for families, a special Christmas Eve service, *Our Whole Lives* (OWL) classes at all levels and more.

Expectations: Volunteers from within the congregation conduct our classes and provide support for special programming. These volunteers who work with children and youth must complete an application, provide references, sign a code of ethics and give consent to a background check. Teacher training and a retreat occur each year. We ask each family to contribute at least one year of service to the religious education program for each child enrolled in Church School. Since parents are expected to make a financial pledge to the church, we charge no tuition.

West Shore's Curriculum

Nursery

Hailey Rinaldo, a 3-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. 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.

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

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 philosophy that young children learn about religion 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 1

September – November: *OWL (Our Whole Lives)*.

December – May: *Creating Home* helps children develop a sense of home that is grounded in faith. They will explore the purpose of having a home and the functions a home serves for us as humans and for other animals. The program speaks of home as a place of belonging and introduces the concept of a "faith home" — our congregation — which offers its members certain joys, protections, and responsibilities.

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 (Grade 4) and Christian (Grade 3) Bibles. 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 source of many of the values of our society. The focus of the curriculum is on "timeless themes" of the Bible, such as 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 will primarily explore early expressions of Unitarian

West Shore's Curriculum

Universalism, including our roots in Transylvania, Judaism and Christianity. The second year ('09 – 10) will focus on eastern religions of Hinduism and Buddhism. The students will also engage in Islam and African religions. 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.

January — March, a supplementary program: *OWL (Our Whole Lives)* is a positive, comprehensive, and age-appropriate educational program that promotes sexual health. The curriculum is based on four primary goals: to provide accurate, developmentally appropriate information; to increase self-esteem and understand relationships with and responsibilities toward others; to develop interpersonal skills including communication, decision making, and problem solving; and to teach responsibility for personal health and safety.

Grades 7 – 8

Coming of Age is the transition from childhood to young adult and appears in the rites of many faiths and cultures. Our congregation marks this transition with a year-long program that includes four parts: pairing youth with adult mentors; discussions and retreats that emphasize self-awareness and confidence-building; service to the church and community; and a culminating affirmation ceremony highlighted by the youths' credo statements. The class meets during Church School as well as some evenings/ weekends to accommodate core activities.

Grades 9 – 12 – Junior Church

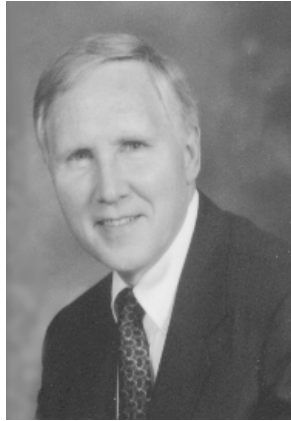
Evensong is a series in which the youth explore individual life journeys through sharing thoughts, experiences, doubts and beliefs about traditional religious concepts. Led by a team of three adult advisors, the youth practice the core value of listening. In addition, the group determines and completes a service project and has the opportunity to create and present an entire sanctuary service for the congregation in the spring.

Special Opportunities

Junior Choir

9:30 - 10:15 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

Winter/Spring 2009

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Time</u>
Junior Choir (<i>Chapel</i>)	9:30 - 10:15 a.m.
Sunday School (<i>Classrooms</i>)	10:30 - 11:45 a.m.
Children's Chapel, Grades K-6 (<i>Chapel</i>)	10:30 - 10:50 a.m.
Intergenerational Service* (<i>Sanctuary</i>)	10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

January 4

Junior Choir
Sunday School

January 11

Junior Choir
Children's Chapel
Sunday School

January 18

Junior Choir
Sunday School

January 25

Junior Choir
Intergenerational Service*
Coming of Age, Youth & Mentors, 11:45

February 1

Junior Choir
Children's Chapel
Sunday School

February 8

Junior Choir
Sunday School

February 15

Junior Choir
Intergenerational Service*
West Shore Circus! Noon—1:30

February 22

Junior Choir
Sunday School

March 1

Junior Choir
Children's Chapel
Sunday School

March 8

Junior Choir
Sunday School
Daylight Savings Time Begins!

March 15

Junior Choir
Sunday School

March 22

Junior Choir
Intergenerational Service*

March 29

Junior Choir
Sunday School

April 5

Junior Choir
Children's Chapel
Sunday School

April 12

Junior Choir
Easter Activities, K-6*

April 19

Junior Choir
Intergenerational Service*

April 26

Junior Choir
Teacher Recognition, Everyone starts
in sanctuary then goes to classes
Last regular day of Sunday School

May 3

Junior Choir
Spring "Green" program begins

May/June

Dates for May/June intergenerational
services, children/youth programming,
Coming of Age Ceremony and Youth
Sunday to be determined.

* 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.

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.

As adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Association, 1985

West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church Mission Statement



Our mission
is to be an inclusive spiritual community
that serves families and individuals
as a sanctuary, a beacon of enlightenment
and a call to service.

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

ONE CHURCH  MANY PATHS
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