

Religious Education at Home



Church of the Larger Fellowship
Unitarian Universalist

Religious Education at Home

A Handbook for Parents



Church of the Larger Fellowship
Boston, Massachusetts

by Betsy Hill Williams

Religious Education at Home

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Introduction

Much has been written and many hours have been spent by parent educators and family life specialists on the “how-to’s” of parenting. Parents of today have more information available to them about child development, discipline techniques and communication skills than parents of any other generation. Yet, in my work with parents, I find that they want something more. Time and again our discussions come around to the layer of life beneath the skills and techniques, to the very heart of family life—the spiritual dimension. For above all else, parents are spiritual nurturers.

To *nurture* means to feed, to nourish, to promote development and growth. It is easy to see how we nurture our children physically and mentally, feeding them “food” for the body and mind. But what about their spirits? As human beings we are born *spiritual beings*. Our spirituality is subject to the same kind of growth and development as our cognitive minds and physical bodies.

In many traditional religions, the approach to spiritual development and religious education takes the form of indoctrination—instruction in dogma and ritual. In other religions, (like ours), the spiritual is approached differently. The mission of Unitarian Universalist religious education is not to shape or

mold our children's spiritual development according to some pre-set plan, but to *nurture the unfolding* of their unique spirituality and to cultivate strong moral character.

Most parents who join a Unitarian Universalist congregation are seeking to guide the spiritual development of their children in ways which will bring about its fullest expression and greatest understanding. They want their children to value the ongoing search for truth and meaning in life, to uplift the moral values and beliefs which promote personal integrity and social justice, to learn about other religions and develop tolerance and respect for the many different ways people express their spirituality.

Nurturing Spirituality

This handbook is intended for use as both a guide and reference source for your family's spiritual journey. A religious journey is a process—a process which for some is filled with celebration and ritual, for others quiet reflection, and still others thoughtful discussion or heated debate. As you and your family grow spiritually, the forms and forums for worship and religious education will change.

It is helpful to begin your religious journey from a common starting place. For this reason Chapter One

begins with a simple history of the evolution of Unitarian Universalist ideas, symbols, and a statement of the current principles and purposes. Share this section with your family. As a spiritual nurturer it is important for you to sense the shape of your own spirituality. If these simple explanations are insufficient, you may wish to enrich your understanding of UUism by reading further (see bibliography).

Chapter Two is about communication. One of our greatest challenges, as spiritual nurturers, is to help our children express the thoughts and feelings they are experiencing. Communication around spiritual questions and values involves process as well as content. I've therefore included broad outlines for *how* you respond to children's questions as well as specific content around several topics UU parents and children generally want to cover.

A structured observance or celebration reinforces spiritual values and brings a family together in community. I've included a wide variety of worship ideas in Chapter Three, from table graces and bedtime prayers to conducting your own worship service. Use those already written, or make up your own. Start slowly—let your family grow into it. Try different ideas and approaches until you find those that fit.

Structured religious education lessons have many of the same virtues as structured worship experiences.

Over time, try to strike a balance between the following general areas of study: UU beliefs/values, our Jewish and Christian heritage, world religions, peace and social justice, environmental education, and personal decision-making skills. The ready-to-use curricula available from the CLF Loan Library are listed in Chapter Four with symbols indicating which of these six topics are covered in each curriculum. You may borrow from the CLF Loan Library, purchase books and curricula directly from the UUA Bookstore, or design your own lessons using the plans and ideas presented in Chapter Four. Start with a topic that interests you or a question that has been raised by someone in your family. You can also contact our minister for lifespan learning at RE@clfu.org to be placed on a list that receives a complete monthly curriculum designed to be used in the home. There are also a wide variety of web-based resources available under the Religious Education menu on the CLF website (www.clfu.org) including a searchable index on on-line CLF materials and KidTalk, a monthly web page for kids and parents.

Chapter Five is filled with resources available within the UUA and affiliate organizations, as well as brief bibliographies on UUism, child development, and parenting.

Keep this handbook available for easy reference, and have fun!

Chapter One
Unitarian Universalism
and Its Symbols

What is UUism?

from *Being a Unitarian Universalist Parent* by
Makanah Elizabeth Morriss and David Hicks
MacPherson

A little over 400 years ago, after careful study of the Bible, scattered groups of people in Europe decided that God was one. (Most Christians then as now believed God to be in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.) These folks were called “Unitarians”—or those who believed in God’s *unity* rather than God’s division into three persons.

About 200 years later, some English preachers began to believe that a loving God would not send people to Hell for eternity. They believed that Jesus had come to earth to save all people, not just certain ones, for everlasting life in heaven. Everyone would be free of sin in the afterlife. Such people were known as Universalists because of their belief in universal salvation, or salvation for all. This idea was brought to America 200 years ago and became very popular.

Late in the eighteenth century, about the same time as Universalism was brought to America, some American churches began to develop Unitarian

ideas. These early Unitarians called themselves “liberal Christians,” meaning they were open to new truths. But they were called “Unitarians” by others because their ideas were like those of English Unitarians, and they finally accepted the name.

Over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both Unitarians and Universalists became more liberal. In addition, each group was becoming more like the other in theology and outlook. One of their new truths was the dignity and worth of each person. Another was the belief that humans could build on this earth the kind of heaven people once only dared to seek in an afterlife. A third new truth was that truth itself can come from the thoughts and efforts of various people around the globe.

In 1961, the Unitarians and Universalists in North America had become so much alike that they merged to become the Unitarian Universalist Association of North America

While modern-day UUs draw on their Judaic and Christian heritages, especially the Protestant tradition, they have come to see that they make up a religion in their own right, seeking to learn from and share the best from the whole human family, and from the natural order of which we are all a part.

What is a short definition of contemporary UUism?

Our Unitarianism teaches us that the world is “one.” All its people are one. Our Universalism reminds us that the purpose of religion is to help us all be “whole.” All our brokenness can be made whole.

The Flaming Chalice Symbol

The most popular symbol of Unitarian Universalism is the flaming chalice. A chalice is a form of cup or goblet, a symbol of wisdom to the ancient Greeks. More than 500 years ago a flaming chalice symbol was used by reformer Jan Hus and his followers in Czechoslovakia during their quest for religious freedom.

The design associated with UUism was drawn during World War II by an Austrian refugee named Hans Deutsch. After escaping from the Nazis twice, Hans found help in the form of food, medicine and clothing from the Unitarian Service Committee in Portugal. The Service Committee (still active today under the name Unitarian Universalist Service Committee or UUSC) was formed by a group of Unitarians in the United States who wanted to work for peace, justice and the relief of suffering around the world. Hans Deutsch was so grateful to the Service Committee that he went to work for them and designed a symbol which they could put on their buildings, trucks, and supply crates. Like the Red Cross symbol, it became an internationally recognized symbol of help.

Today the symbol takes many forms and has a variety of meanings. Interpretations of the flame include: the warmth of love, the light of truth, a beacon of service to humankind, the divine light within each one of us.

Because there isn't an *official* chalice shape or design, UU congregations and individuals have been inspired to create a variety of logos, receptacles, jewelry and other chalice designs for liturgical and other purposes. A dish or cup with a candle can serve as a focus in a simple worship service.

Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes

Unitarian Universalists do not have a creed. However, from time to time statements of generally accepted principles are written and published, establishing guidelines to live by and common ground among congregations. At the 1985 General Assembly meeting of Unitarian Universalists the following statement of principles and purposes was adopted.

WE, the member congregations of the UUA, 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 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.

The living tradition 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 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 the idolatries of the mind and spirit.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and enobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our

understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

The UU Principles in Language for Children

- Every person is important and valuable.
- All people should be treated fairly.
- Our churches are places where we should accept one another and learn together.
- Each person should be free to search for what is true and right.
- All people have the right to speak out and vote on things that matter to them.
- We should build a peaceful, fair, and free world.
- We need to take care of earth, the home we share with all living things.

Chapter Two

Communicating about Spirituality

Children, though natural questioners, are not skeptics, for whom doubt is an end in itself. Children are as open to belief and faith as they are to questioning. They are looking, as we are all looking, for things on which they can depend, values they can faithfully live by, ideas that make sense, things to believe in.

The Reverend Earl Holt

Guidelines for Talking with Children about Religion

Questioning is an essential part of Unitarian Universalism. But as Earl Holt suggests, we need to do more than encourage our children's questions—we need to be ready to respond to them in a way that brings understanding and security. *How* you respond to children's questions is almost as important as *what* you actually say. Here are some guidelines for this process.

Stop and listen to the question. Make sure you understand what your child really wants to know. Some "simple" questions mask underlying fears which may not be addressed by a simple answer.

Others are quite the opposite—like the girl who asked her mother, “Where do I come from?” and the mother responded with a lengthy detailed explanation of human reproduction, after which the girl said, “No, Billy says he’s from Chicago, where am I from?” Ask for further clarification if you’re not sure what your child really wants to know!

Begin with a “door-opener.” Start your response with a statement that invites your child’s continued participation, welcomes his/her own ideas and suggests that your response is just one of many possibilities. Simple statements such as, “What an interesting question,” or, “I’ve often wondered that, too,” set the stage for open discussion. Door-openers also give you time to gather your thoughts, articulate your own beliefs, or, if appropriate, express a UU consensus.

Communicate feelings. Emotions are closely tied to our belief system and it is important to help children see these connections. Listen for your child’s feelings about the issue and let him/her know you understand and accept them. Sharing your feelings about a difficult subject builds a bond between you and teaches your children how to deal directly with their own feelings.

Taking a stand: Am I too authoritative or too wishy-washy? UU parents who want to guide but

not control the natural unfolding of their children's spirituality are often concerned about how to express their own beliefs. Remember, you *can* hold a belief without being dogmatic and you can wonder about the mysteries of life without being anxious. It's important that your children see both. So say that you don't know when you don't, and take a strong personal stand when you feel one; just try not to do either all the time! Children need to know that some things are right while others are wrong, just as they need to know that some questions may take years to fully answer, and still others may be ultimately unanswerable.

Stages of Faith Many theories of child development have emerged since Freud first introduced the idea that human development follows certain stages. James Fowler has proposed an understanding of faith development which corresponds to Jean Piaget's stage theory of cognitive development. Briefly stated, Fowler's six stages of faith describe different ways of understanding and giving meaning to the world—from egocentric, imaginative and fantasy-filled imaging (roughly ages 3-7); through mid-childhood's concrete, literal and rigid interpretation of symbols, beliefs and moral rules; to a more fluid, reflective way of thinking which, at first, is heavily influenced by the expectations and judgments of others (adolescence); and then finally becomes autonomous. To learn more about these stages and how to

focus your religious education efforts at your child's development level, refer to the bibliography in Chapter Five.

Some Difficult Questions

Are we Christian? This is a tricky question with both “yes” and “no” answers depending on how you define your terms. Some UUs consider themselves Christian because they find an affirmation of the goodness of life and the dignity of all persons in the life and teachings of Jesus. However, the vast majority of UUs are not Christian if being so is defined by “accepting Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior” or believing he is the second person in the holy Trinity. Most UUs, even those who do *not* consider themselves Christian, regard Jesus as one of many great religious teachers who have lived in different parts of the world at different times.

Is the Bible true? UUs may read the Bible for the historical account it provides or as ancient literature. Some UUs consider it a source of spiritual inspiration and ethical guidance. We read the Bible along with other religious and secular sources in the hope that it will help us find our own spiritual path, our own answers to life's most difficult questions. Here again we differ from many Christians who consider the Bible to be the literal word of God and therefore the only source for right living.

What is God? The traditional Western concept of God is that of a power greater than humanity, which creates, sustains, uplifts and directs all life everywhere. A hallmark of UUism is the freedom it allows individuals to develop their own unique understanding of and relationship to God. Acceptance of a wide range of beliefs about God means that UUs are monotheists, atheists, agnostics, humanists, mystics, pantheists, polytheists and more. The essential UU belief underlying these differences, is that God—or whatever one chooses to call the spirit of life—is a loving, hopeful, positive force.

Do Unitarian Universalists pray? UUs are not required to learn or recite particular prayers. Many UUs take quiet moments of prayer or meditation to sense their oneness with the whole of the universe or to feel their connection with the source and spirit of life. Some UUs pray or meditate to gain insight into problems they face. Prayer can also be paying attention to others, focusing love and attention on others who are experiencing difficulty or pain. (See Chapter Three for ideas on prayers for children.)

How do I know what is right? Religion has traditionally defined ethical values and given people a code of ethics (right behavior) to live by. Many religions have a book of scriptures which is considered the *singular* source of authority for ethical decision-making. UUism, derived from Christianity, contin-

ues to affirm traditional Judeo-Christian ethical values. *In addition* to these centuries-old traditions, UUs also rely on reason, human experience and personal conscience for moral authority when deciding what is right and wrong.

Teaching children ethical values and helping them learn to apply them is an important parental job. Suggest to your children that they ask themselves these four questions whenever they are wondering what is the right thing to do. Will it hurt anyone? Am I being honest? Is it fair to everyone? Will I feel OK about myself if I do this?

Why do bad things happen? Some religions teach that bad things happen as punishment from God. Some people believe there are evil spirits in the world causing bad things to happen. Still others believe that bad things happen to people who are not in harmony with the rest of the world. Unitarian Universalists believe there is no *one* answer to this question and it is up to each of us to decide for ourselves. UUs generally believe that disasters such as floods and life-threatening diseases are natural occurrences, not punishments. People's behavior (such as mistreating yourself or others), and living under certain circumstances (such as poverty) can cause terrible things to happen. This is why UUs believe it is important to work for peace and justice wherever we can.

What happens after we die?

Let us be honest with death. Let us not pretend that it is less than it is. It is separation. It is sorrow. It is grief. But let us neither pretend that death is more than it is. It is not annihilation. As long as memory endures [the deceased will live on].

Source Unknown

Although Unitarian Universalists differ greatly in how they articulate their understanding of death, there is general agreement that:

1. death is a natural part of the cycle of life;
2. death means loss, sorrow and grief which must be felt; and
3. the spirit of life lives on in the memories and lives of the living.

Although some UUs may believe in an after-life, the traditional concepts of heaven and hell as reward or punishment for life on earth are not generally accepted. Rather UUs see heaven and hell as conditions created here on earth—prejudice is hell, peace is heaven.

Why do we celebrate Christmas and Easter?

Both these holidays have two parts: the traditional Christian meaning and an ancient pagan tradition. The date of the mass to honor Jesus' birth (Christ-

mas) was set at the same time as the Roman mid-winter festival of light (Saturnalia). The Christian celebration of Jesus' resurrection may be named after the Anglo-Saxon goddess Eostre, who was worshipped in ancient celebrations of rebirth each spring.

Today UUs and other non-Christians celebrate these holidays for the deeper meanings which thread throughout these two traditions. At Christmas-time we celebrate with beautiful lights the birth of a great spiritual leader, and in so doing rejoice in the love and hope which *every* human birth brings. Decorating our homes with colorful lights and greens, we also celebrate the return of the sun after the longest winter night. At Easter-time, we celebrate the cycles of life (with colored eggs and chocolate bunnies), as well as the deeper religious message of the season—the strength of faith and the hope of renewal.

Chapter Three

Worship and Meditation

Some form of religious observance—call it worship, celebration, or what you will—is necessary to spiritual growth whether you are part of a congregation or not. You may worship, celebrate, sing, and meditate by yourself when you feel the need. You may also create opportunities to do these things together as a family in your own home.

Here are some ideas to help stir up your own creativity. Choose what fits your family, realizing that your ways of celebrating will change as your family changes. Whatever pattern of religious celebration and education you develop, make it your own, enjoy it, and keep it flexible so that it can grow and change. (In addition to the samples included here, you will find suggested readings, chalice lightings, graces and prayers in the *CLF Handbook of Religious Services*.)

Graces and Prayers

Around the Table If yours is one of those families that never seems able to sit down for a meal together, try to find at least one time during the week when this can happen. It may turn out to be a weekend breakfast instead of an evening meal.

Lighting a Chalice or a Candle You can make your own chalice by placing a small votive candle in a shallow bowl. When you sit down together, take turns lighting the chalice and saying special words. You might simply say: “Today I’m thankful for...,” “This flame is to help us remember...,” or “This day is important to me because...”

Other words for chalice or candle lighting:

Flaming chalice, burning bright,
now you share with us your light.
May we always learn to share
with all people everywhere.

Eva Ceskava

We light this chalice for the light of truth
We light this chalice for the warmth of love.
We light this chalice for the energy of action.

MaryAnn Moore

Saying Grace Family members can collect lines of poetry or other readings that are meaningful to them; take turns saying grace in their own words; or hold hands around the table for a silent grace, passing around a hand-squeeze to say “Amen.”

Other table graces:

Earth, who gives to us this food,
Sun, who makes it ripe and good:
Dear Earth, dear Sun, by you we live;

to you our loving thanks we give.

Native American

God, we thank you for this food,
for rest and home and all things good,
for wind and rain and sun above,
for peace on earth and those we love.

Source Unknown

We lift our hearts in thanks today
for all the gifts of life.

Percival Chubb

Bedtime Prayers UU Religious Educator Barbara Marshman offers these bedtime prayer thoughts for UU kids:

- Think about things you are thankful for today.
- Think about something you feel sorry that you did or said today and any way you can make it right.
- Think about something you hope will happen, and any way you can help it to happen.
- Think about being in a place of beauty or a favorite place where you feel safe and good.
- Think about the people you love and their love for you. See each person's face in your mind. Give them a goodnight smile!
-
- Words for bedtime prayer:
I am thankful for the night

and for the pleasant morning light,
for health and strength and loving care
and all that makes the world so fair. Amen.

Rebecca J. Weston (Alt.)

Thank you, God, for all life brings,
for health and play and all good things,
and help me use my heart and mind
to make me strong and keep me kind. Amen.

Robert M. & Polly Cooper

Milestones and Special Occasions

Birthdays, of course! In addition to your usual practices, add a few minutes to reflect on the past year and share favorite memories of, by, or about the birthday person, ways in which s/he has grown, wishes and hopes for the coming year.

Other occasions warrant celebrations: promotions, getting onto the team or into the chorus or school play, getting a driver's license, the baby's first words or first steps, or a "first time ever" or "first time this year" for just about anything significant to you.

Seasons of the year are natural points of celebration: first days of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, and also those "cross-quarter" days (the days halfway between equinox and solstice): February 2 (Candlemas, Ground Hog Day), May 1, August 1 and November 1 (Halloween, All Saints Day). African

American heritage and Native American heritage are also good themes for celebrations. Similarly many UUs like to celebrate the holidays of various cultures/religions such as hosting a Seder at Pass-over, or celebrating Kwanza in late December.

Birthdays of Famous UUs and Others Choose a “famous UU” birthday to celebrate each month. Let various members of the family be responsible for decorations, food, and appropriate stories, readings, or songs. If cake and candles is what makes it Happy Birthday time at your house, then do it for Thomas Jefferson and Clara Barton as well!

Conduct Your Own Worship Service

You can create your own worship services at home. Sunday morning is the traditional time, but you may find another time that suits your family better. Weekly is the usual interval, but you might begin with a monthly service and move toward greater frequency.

Create a Setting You may decide to do one of the following:

- Gather around a table with a chalice, candles, flowers, or special objects.
- Form a half circle of chairs around the fireplace, perhaps adding a special picture on the mantelpiece.

- Spread a bright-colored cloth on the floor, arranging bits of nature or art around your chalice in the center, and sitting around in a circle.
- Gather outdoors in a beautiful spot.

Create a Pattern Here is the format one CLF family uses for a Sunday morning service in their living room:

- Each member of the family lights a candle
- Opening words: these can be a favorite poem or something appropriate from the newspaper, a magazine, or a book. Or you can repeat the same words each time, such as:

To this quiet place of beauty
we have come from workday things,
pausing for a while and waiting
for the thoughts that quiet brings.

Source Unknown

- Recorded music
- Thoughts for the week: each person shares high points and low points of the past week, what they are looking forward to in the coming week, and anything they are worrying about
- Closing words or a song they sing together

They take turns doing the opening words and choosing the music. Sometimes they go on to do a session from a religious education curriculum borrowed from CLF.

Another Way to Create a Service Together

- Provide a box or paper bag into which you can drop ideas or themes for services as they occur to you. P.T. Barnum's birthday, Harvest Moon, Helping Others, Making Our Home Ecologically Responsible, or Black History Month are some ideas to start with.
- After your family worship, but while you are still gathered in your worship space, someone reaches into the box or bag and pulls out a slip of paper with a theme.
- Decide among you who is to be responsible for 1) creating a visual focal point, 2) opening words, 3) a song, 4) a reading, and 5) a closing. Agree to present the service next time you gather.

You might also plan a service around religious questions that members of your family raise. Take some time to gather ideas and materials that focus on the question in different ways. (Call the CLF Religious Education Director or Minister for ideas, stories, etc.) Encourage other members of your family to say how they feel about the question or what their responses might be. The point, of course, is not so much to answer the question as to give it the attention and importance that it deserves and to keep those big questions coming.

If your family is interested in reading a sermon as part of your worship, you could use the sermons in

Quest (available on-line at www.clfuu.org/quest) or borrow printed *Month of Sundays* sets from CLF. Each set contains four sermons by a UU minister with readings and a children's story to form a complete service. You could adapt this material easily to fit your family's interests.

Chapter Four

Doing Religious Education

For many UU parents, religious “literacy” is one of the main objectives of religious education. Ever since the Supreme Court decision barring school prayer, religion has become “the great unmentionable” in public schools. Yet few would argue the importance of knowing the classic stories and famous sayings of the Bible, or the basic beliefs and practices of the five major world religions: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. Our understanding of both history and current world events are informed by religious literacy.

Although Bible study and world religions have long been a part of UU religious education, our objectives have changed over the years. In the 1960s and ‘70s the trend was to teach as impartially as possible about different religions—each was valued equally, none more right, good or true than another. We wanted our children to be free to pick and choose from this “religious smorgasbord,” to design their own religion. We talked a lot about what it meant to be a Jew, a Christian, a Buddhist, but we talked very little about what it meant to be a Unitarian Universalist. This approach contributed to our unfortunate reputation as “the religion which doesn’t believe anything.”

Fortunately, we've stopped talking of UUism as "a little of this and a little of that" and started talking about what Unitarian Universalism is *in its own right*. There's been a shift from teaching world religions and the Bible to learn what *others* believe, to teaching world religions and the Bible to better understand and articulate what *we* believe. Parents are flocking to UUism today not because it represents a watered-down, melting-pot religion. They come because, after a thoughtful search for spiritual practices and a belief system to match their life experience, they have *found* Unitarian Universalism. Today, as we teach the Hebrew scriptures or the practices of Islam, we do so to both understand the people who hold these beliefs *and* to identify the principles or values inherent in these belief systems which inform *our* convictions.

Create Your Own Lesson Plan

You and your family might like to design your own religious education lessons. The first step is to locate a resource book with a story or narrative you can use as a focus of the lesson. The CLF library has two collections by UU educator Sophia Fahs which are good for this purpose: *From Long Ago and Many Lands* and *Old Tales for a New Day*. (The latter comes with background information and discussion questions for parents to use.) Your local library may also have non-fiction books about the major world religions.

Plan ahead by reading the story to yourself first, identifying UU principles and values which the story portrays. Begin the lesson with a brief description of the culture and tradition from which the story comes. Locate the country or area on a map where the story takes place, and spend a few minutes sharing what you each know about that part of the world. Who are the major figures and what special holidays are associated with the religion or culture in the story? If your discussion raises more questions than it answers, perhaps someone would be willing to do further research.

After reading the story, lead your family in a brief discussion of what they liked and didn't like about the story, how the characters felt and what their actions indicated about their beliefs. Conduct a discussion of UU principles and values which are identified in the story. (If you are unsure about these, refer to the UU Principles and Purposes on pages 4-6.) An activity that engages everyone in creating something relevant to the topic adds meaning to the lesson which is often long remembered. Conclude with a statement (or statements made by each family member) that summarizes the meaning of the story and clearly conveys *your* beliefs regarding the issues raised.

A Sample Lesson Plan

- Gather together and have a brief personalized “we are here” ceremony. You could light a candle, read a chalice lighting poem or go around in a circle giving everyone a chance to tell one “good” and one “bad” thing which happened to them that week.
- Read or tell a story from your own collection, your local library or from one of the books/curricula in the CLF Loan Library.
- Share a small snack while you talk about the story and the ideas/values in it.
- Engage the children in *creating* something relevant to the story/topic. Vary the activities from time to time so you include physical activities as well as cooking, and arts and crafts. Feel free to pick and choose among the many ideas in the CLF RE curricula—even if you don’t use all the parts of a curriculum.
- You might like to have a closing ceremony that includes a statement of affirmation; or something you believe, or will try to do in the coming weeks which is related to the story/topic.

Selected CLF Loan Library Curricula

All of the following curricula are available for purchase, many from the UUA Bookstore.

Beginning Unitarian Universalism (ages 8-11)

The Canadians: Adventures of Our People (ages 9-12)
Caring for Our Planet Earth (all ages)
Celebrating Family (all ages)
Experiences with Living Things: An Introduction to Ecology for Five-to-Eight Year Olds
From Long Ago and Many Lands (all ages)
Holidays and Holy Days (all ages)
Honoring Our Mother Earth (all ages)
How Can I Know What to Believe? (ages 12-15)
How Others Worship (ages 12-15)
Jesus: The Carpenter's Son (ages 9-12)
The Life and Teachings of Jesus (ages 9-11)
Old Tales for a New Day: Early Answers to Life's Eternal Questions (ages 9-14)
On the Path: Spirituality for Youth and Adults (ages 15-adult)
People Like Us (all ages)
Resources from Peace Experiments (all ages)
A Stepping Stone Year (ages 9-12)
A Stream of Living Souls and Living in the Wind (all ages)
Stories About God (ages 5-12)
These Live Tomorrow: Twenty Unitarian Universalist Biographies (ages 12-18)
Timeless Themes (ages 7-12)
A Unitarian Universalist Catechism (all ages)
We Believe: Learning and Living Our Unitarian Universalist Principles (all ages)
What Is Religion—For Others and for Us? (ages 7-12)
Why Do Bad Things Happen? (all ages)

Chapter Five

Resources and Bibliographies

Opportunities for Youth Scouting Awards

Love and Help: a self-paced workbook for Cub Scouts (ages 7-11) to earn the religion emblem. The workbook is available at the UUA Bookstore; the emblem is sold separately through the UUA Youth Office.

Religion in Life for Boys and *Religion in Life for Girls*: self-paced, individualized programs, well suited as UU identity and Coming of Age programs for CLFers. Enrollment in scouting is not necessary to take advantage of either *Religion in Life* program. The workbooks are available at the UUA Bookstore.

Coming of Age

A compilation of Rites of Passage/Coming of Age programs from several churches that created such programs. The cost is \$20, including postage, for each copy ordered.

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) Continental Conference (CON-CON)

This annual conference, which takes place the third week in August, is organized by the Steering Committee of the Youth Council and the UUA Youth Of-

ficie. The location of the conference varies from year to year. Special attention is given to the theme of Con-Con through guest speakers, workshops, and special events. Programming also includes swimming, boating, games, the traditional banquet, auction, and coffeehouse, arts and crafts, worship services, and lots of laughter and fun.

Synapse

The YRUU newspaper, for ages 14-20, is written by UU youth and advisors from across the continent and edited and published by the UUA Youth Office. Subscription is free and may be obtained by sending the Youth Office your name, address, phone number and date of birth. CLF youth, ages 14-18 can read *Synapse*, the UUA's publication for youth at www.uua.org/yruu/synapse. automatically.

National Workshop on Social Justice

The Youth Office is one of several UU offices and organizations which participates in this annual conference for youth and adults. This conference is held in the spring in Washington, D.C. and includes a chance to lobby Congress members. Contact the UUA Youth Office or the Washington Office for Social Justice for more information.

Youth Conference on Disarmament

Co-organized by the UU United Nations Office and the UUA Youth Office, this event is held each November in New York City and is limited to 25 participants between the ages of 15 and 17, geographically representative of the continent. Participants will have an opportunity to learn about the United Nations and the UU-UN Office, learn to view disarmament from a global perspective, and share techniques for effective action. Contact the UUA Youth Office or the UU United Nations Office for more information.

Directory for Youth Activities

UUA Youth Office

25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108
617-742-2100, ext.350,351,352

UUA Bookstore

25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
617-742-2100 ext.102

UU United Nations Office

777 United Nations Plaza, Suite 7D
New York, NY 10017
212-986-5165

Washington Office for Social Justice

100 Maryland Ave., NE, Room 106
Washington, DC 20002
202-547-0254

CLF Student Service

College students may wish to stay connected to UUism by enrolling in the CLF Student Service. Each subscriber receives eight issues of *Quest* as well as the UUA publication, *The World*, from October to June, at his/her college address. Write: CLF Student Service, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108 for an application.

Opportunities for Children and Families

Throughout the United States there are many camps and conferences affiliated with the UUA and attended largely, though certainly not exclusively, by Unitarian Universalist children and families. These camps provide a wonderful opportunity for children to develop a UU identity and “network” with other UUs around the country. The family camps offer rare opportunities for families to spend meaningful, fun time together, and strengthen their connection to UUism.

**Council of Unitarian Universalist Camps and
Conferences (CU2C2)**

c/o Reid Swanson
7421 Foxleigh Way
Alexandria, VA 22310
(703) 922-0206

“See You Too,” as it’s called by its members, is the unifying body of 30+ UU operated camp and conference centers. If you are interested in a particular camp which is not listed here, try contacting this clearing house for information.

**Clara Barton Camp for Girls with Diabetes,
Inc.**

P.O. Box 356, 68 Clara Barton Rd.
North Oxford, MA 01537

Located on 128 wooded acres in North Oxford, Massachusetts, the Clara Barton Camp for Girls with Diabetes, Inc., provides two-week residential summer camp for insulin-dependent diabetic girls ages six to sixteen. The camp serves 80 girls at each of four sessions.

**DeBenneville Pines UU Camp & Conference
Center**

41750 W. Jenks Lake Rd.
Angelus Oaks, CA 92304
(714) 794-2928

DeBenneville Pines offers five weeks of youth camp per year, three in summer, two in winter. They also host RE Family Week and DeBenneville Family Summer Camp, as well as a variety of weekend conferences.

Ferry Beach Park Association, Inc.

5 Morris Ave.

Saco, ME 04072

Off-season telephone: (207) 284-8612

Contact: Shelby Woods, Business Manager

Ferry Beach offers a variety of week-long summer camps for youth and families. Set on 70 shorefront acres, accommodations include dormitories, tent and trailer sites. Summer program schedules are available upon request at the above address.

Lake Geneva Summer Assembly

c/o Joyce Cauffield

707 Doepke Ln.

Cincinnati, OH 45231

Held July 4-July 10, this family camp on the clearest freshwater lake in Wisconsin has programs for children, junior and senior high youth, as well as a theme speaker and a wide selection of workshops for adults. Room assignments made by May 1.

The Mountain/Highlands Camp and Conference Center

841 Highway 106
P.O. Box 1299
Highlands, NC 28741
(704) 526-5838/526-4505
FAX (704) 526-2511

Perched on the cliffs of a 4200-foot mountain, The Mountain is surrounded by miles of protected forests where waterfalls and seasonal wildflower displays offer UUs a breath of “fresh-air spirituality.” Youth summer camps, Elderhostel, and a wide variety of week-long and weekend conferences are all offered.

Ohio Meadville Summer Institute (OMSI)

O-M District of the UUA
760 East Broad St.
Columbus, OH 43205

This week-long program held in July on the grounds of Bethany College in Bethany, WV, is designed to build intergenerational community among UUs of the Ohio Meadville District and beyond. The week includes structured and unstructured activities for all ages, a theme speaker, daily worship services, and a variety of social and cultural events

Rowe Camp and Conference Center

Kings Highway Rd.

Rowe, MA 01367

(413) 339-4954

Since 1924 Unitarian and Universalist teenagers have been coming to this unique camp in the Berkshires of Western Massachusetts. In recent years they have added camps for pre-teens, women, single people and families. They also offer weekend retreats for adults and families throughout the year. Write or call the above address for a free brochure and camp schedule.

Southeast Unitarian Universalist Summer Institute (SUUSI)

Virginia Polytechnical Institute

Blacksburg, VA 24060-63

Contact: Dawn Kenny

1913 Southcliff Rd.

Richmond, VA 23225

(804) 231-5370

This week-long gathering of adults and children in July of each year creates a caring community where participants can expand and renew themselves.

Star Island Conference Center

110 Arlington St.

Boston, MA 02116

(mid-September through mid-June)

(617) 426-7988

or

P.O. Box 178

Portsmouth, NH 03802

(mid-June through mid-September)

(603) 964-7252

Star Island, one of the Isle of Shoals located six miles at sea off Portsmouth, NH, has been the site of religious and educational summer conferences since 1897. Week-long and several weekend conferences during the summer focus on such topics as the Arts, Natural History, Religious Education, International Affairs, Religion in an Age of Science, and include several Family Weeks. Conference brochures and registration forms are available in late January. To receive these, please send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope with postage to cover 2 ounces to the Boston address shown above.

Selected Bibliographies

Unitarian Universalism

The following books, and accompanying study guides, are available from the CLF Loan Library. Selections marked with an * are also available for purchase from the UUA Bookstore.

Buehrens, John A. & Church, F. Forrester. *Our Chosen Faith*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.*

Larson, Tony & Ellen. A Schmidt. *Catechism for Unitarian Universalists*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1989.

Marshall, George, *The Challenge of a Liberal Faith*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1966. *

Mendelsohn, Jack. *Being Liberal in an Illiberal Age: Why I am a Unitarian Universalist*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964. *

Miller, Robert L'H. *Say Your Unitarian Universalism*. 1989. Available for sale by the author. Contact UUA, 25 Beacon St. Boston, MA 02108 for current address.

Murry, William R. *A Faith for All Seasons: Liberal Religion and the Crises of Life*. Bethesda MD: River Road Press, 1990. *

Child Development

Child development and parenting selections which are marked with an * are available from the CLF Loan Library.

Bell, Ruth. *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives*. New York: Random House, 1981. (for teenagers)*

Elkind, D. *All Grown Up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis*. New York: Addison-Wesley, 1984.*

Ilg, F. & L.B Ames. *The Gesell Institute's Child Behavior from Birth to Ten*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

Leach, Penelope. *Your Baby and Child: From Birth to Age Five*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1989.

Madaras, Lynda. *The What's Happening to My Body? Book for Boys and Book for Girls*. New York: New Market Press, 1988. (for ages 9 and up)

Parenting

Boston Women's Health Book Collective. *Ourselves and Our Children*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978.

Elium, Don & Jeanne Elium. *Raising a Son: Parents and the Making of a Healthy Man*. Hillsboro, OR: Beyond Words Publishing, 1992.

Faber, A. & E Mazlish. *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*. New York: Avon, 1982.

Fitzpatrick, Jean Grasso. *Something More, Nurturing Your Child's Spiritual Growth*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.*

Gardner, Richard, M.D. *The Parents Book About Divorce*. New York: Bantam Books, 1977.

Grollman, Earl A. *Talking About Death, A Dialogue Between Parent and Child*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970. *

Hunter, Edith F. *Conversations with Children*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961. *

The Questioning Child and Religion. Boston: Starr King Press, 1956. *

Kitzinger, Sheila & Celia Kitzinger. *Tough Questions, Talking Straight with Your Kids about the Real World*. Boston: Harvard Common Press, 1991.

Popkin, Michael. *Active Parenting: Teaching Cooperation, Courage and Responsibility*. 1987.

Your Church at Home Anywhere in the World

The Church of the Larger Fellowship (CLF) provides a ministry to isolated religious liberals around the world. Our denomination's "church by mail," the CLF offers a spiritual home within the Unitarian Universalist movement for individuals unable to attend a local congregation. CLF members receive regular monthly mailings and may borrow sermons, books, CDs and DVDs, and lifespan religious education curricula from our lending library.

With *Church OnLine*, the CLF also supports many small congregations with worship and programming. For more information, write or call the Church of the Larger Fellowship, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108; (617) 948-6150 or e-mail at clf@clfuu.org. Visit our website at www.clfuu.org.

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