

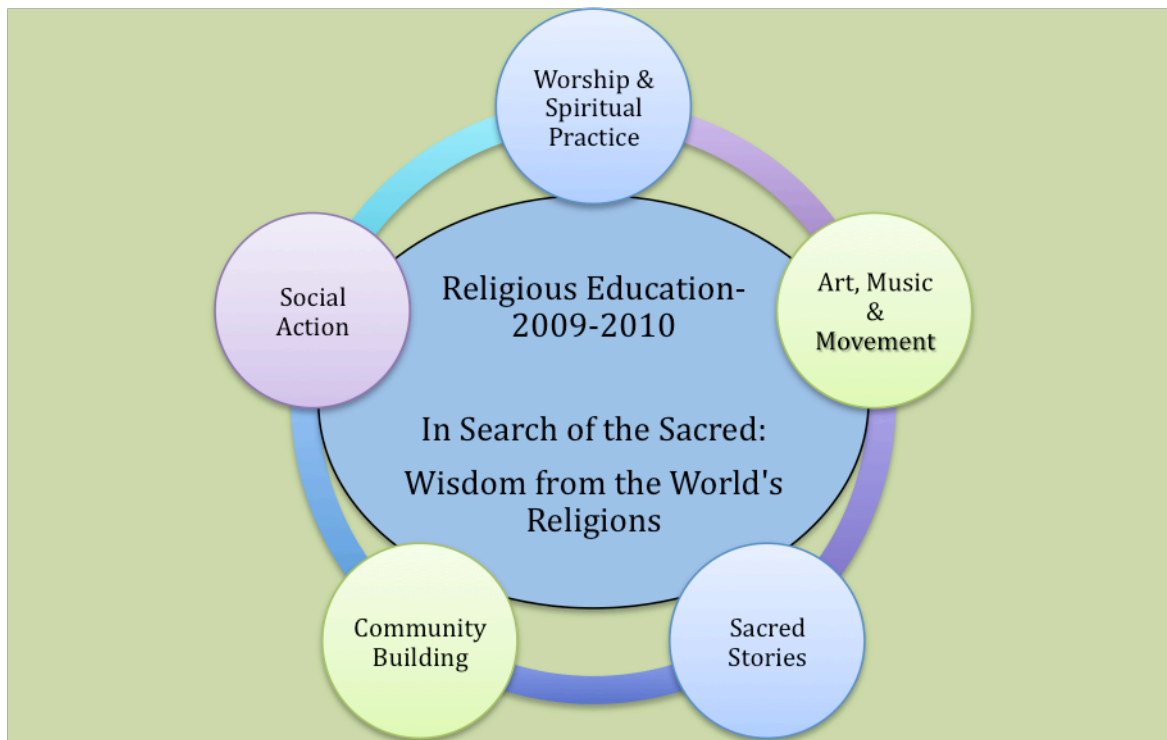
Religious Education 2009-2010

Countryside Church UU

Elements of our Program

We strive to create a church community, where children, youth and parents feel welcome and nurtured in their spiritual journey. We believe there are many important elements to a balanced religious education program, including:

- Worship and ritual, music, spiritual practice, creative expression
- Community building experiences for parents, youth and children
- Exploring sacred stories and rituals from the world's religious traditions
- Opportunities to learn and respond to social justice issues



Support for All Families

We are an intentionally inclusive congregation, and we welcome all who covenant with us in the spirit of mutual respect and understanding. We welcome families of all shapes and sizes, and hope that here you may find a spiritual home in which to raise your family.

We believe parents are a child's primary spiritual guides and that working together we can help nurture your child's spiritual growth. When your child is registered for our religious education program, you will receive e-mail updates to keep you informed of the topics and experiences in your child's classroom, and opportunities for further exploration at home. We also offer an extensive RE Resource Library that parents may access to check-out a variety of books and resources. A new "Spirit Circle for All Ages" worship experience begins Oct. 4, 2009 and will continue the first Sunday of each month from 9:30-9:50am, followed by fellowship and refreshment for all ages (see related brochure "Worship Experiences at CCUU" for more information).

Parents are encouraged to ask questions, visit classrooms, and participate in a variety of programs throughout the year to support your own spiritual growth. We look forward to working together with you to nurture the spiritual lives of our children!

Rev. Hilary Landua Krivchenia

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Classroom Descriptions

*Please note: age guidelines refer to the age of your child by Sept. 1, 2009. These are guidelines; we welcome a conversation with you about the best fit for your child. Please contact Colleen Vahey, Director of Religious Education, to discuss the particular needs of your child/ren.

Chalice Children (infant – age 2*)

We will celebrate Sundays with stories, music, play and art. This class is provided throughout the RE year, during every worship service except Christmas Eve. Our goal is to provide children with a positive introduction to the RE classroom, and to experience church as a nurturing place for friendship and learning.

We've adopted a modified Spirit Play routine to help meet the needs of active infants and toddlers and attune to their spiritual awareness. The morning routine will include an opening circle with music and movement, felt board story, free play and art, snack, and a closing song.

Children are also welcome to attend service with you in the Sanctuary. For parents seeking a place to be with their child/ren outside the Sanctuary, you may listen to the service in our Family Resource Room (just to the right at the end of the long hallway – room #3).

To help ensure a positive and safe experience for everyone, we have a parent sheet for you to complete when checking in your child/ren, including information about allergies, diaper changes, and pick-up procedures. We also ask that you sit in the back five rows of the Sanctuary in front of the pulpit, or leave us your cell phone number to buzz, in the event that we need to reach you during the service.

Spirit Play (ages 3-Kindergarten*)

Our new Spirit Play program is Montessori-inspired and intentionally created with stories that reflect our UU principles and sources. Developmental research suggests that between the ages of 3-6 children begin to ask existential questions such as: Who am I?, Where did I come from?; What is my purpose?; What are my gifts?. By offering a welcoming and intentional classroom, and opportunities for reflection through story, movement and art, children are given an “existential toolkit” to help them explore the wonder and mystery of life.

The morning routine includes:

- Gathering Circle to include chalice lighting, music, meditation/prayer
- Story followed by wondering questions
- Choosing “work” from a variety of possibilities including: painting, clay, sand art, puzzles, finger labyrinths, yoga, sacred corner, story baskets, and reading corner

- Cleaning-up and Closing Circle with “Feast” (snack) and closing music.

Descriptions of the stories and wondering questions will be sent home each week, so you and your child may continue to explore at home.

Grades 1-2: Moral Tales & Picture Book of World Religions

As Unitarian Universalists, we draw inspiration from “the wisdom of the world’s religions” -- one of the six sources of our living tradition. Picture Book of World Religions introduces children to Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism through beautifully illustrated stories from each tradition. These stories illustrate universal human themes such as the value of loyalty, friendship, family, and the practice of compassion. It is our hope that children will enjoy these stories from different faiths -- begin a journey of understanding the diversity of spiritual practice and religious faith, while identifying and celebrating UU principles and values.

Moral Tales is a new UU “Tapestry of Faith” curriculum that helps children explore the situations and decision they may face in every day life. Moral Tales provides children with spiritual and ethical tools to make choices and take actions that reflect their Unitarian Universalist beliefs and values. The stories in Moral Tales draw from all six UU Sources to help inspire children’s learning to make moral choices.

Grades 3-4: Holidays and Holy Days

This year children will learn about the origins and meanings of holiday and holy day celebrations from a rich variety of religious traditions. We will also view segments from a new series of DVD’s, “Understanding World Religions”, featuring children who introduce their own religious tradition from their own perspective -- Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism. Activities will help our children be culturally literate, foster deep appreciation and respect for varieties of religious experience, and explore how to discern and live out their own beliefs as UU’s in a religiously plural world. This is a favorite curriculum for teachers and children alike.

Grades 5-6-7: Neighboring Faiths

This program is a cornerstone of Unitarian Universalist religious education. It explicitly addresses UU Principles and draws from the six UU Sources. It promotes understanding and respect for other cultures while nurturing Unitarian Universalist identity. Every four weeks the class will learn about a religious tradition – its’ history, beliefs, holidays and spiritual practices, and then either welcome a guest visitor from that particular religious tradition, or take a field trip to an area house of worship. We hope that through participation in this program, youth will become more aware of the many connections between Unitarian Universalism and other faith traditions, and will increase their understanding, appreciation, and skills for living in a religiously plural society.

Grade 8: Coming-of-Age

Coming-of-Age is a Unitarian Universalist rite of passage that honors a young person’s passage into greater maturity, responsibility and spiritual commitment. It provides a supportive community for both parents and youth. COA creates intentional opportunities for youth to explore “Who am I?” in new ways and engages youth in the process of creating their own identity.

What can you hope to gain from COA?

- Get to know yourself better, and begin to understand other people better.
- Be in a meaningful community of youth, beyond labels and cliques.
- Understand your own religious beliefs more deeply and know how to explain your beliefs.
- Identify what you most value in life, and find tools for living your beliefs each day.
- Explore spiritual practices and ways to further connect with what's spiritual – those things that put you in touch with the miracle of life
- Build a strong and supportive relationship with an adult mentor.
- Have a real sense of accomplishment and growing sense of maturity when COA is done.

Elements of the Program:

- Community Building
- Meetings with an adult mentor and the Minister
- Worship and Spiritual Practice
- Social Action
- Overnight Weekend Retreats (Fall & Spring)
- Affirmation Project -- April/May
- COA Worship Service -- May
- Pilgrimage to Boston -- June

Senior High Youth Group

The senior high youth group meets Sunday mornings 10:30-11:45. Each Sunday the group begins with a chalice lighting and confidential sharing of joys and concerns, followed by discussion and/or activities based on selected topics. Our ministry to and with youth includes attention to five areas:

1. **Worship**
2. **Leadership**
3. **Community Building**
4. **Social Action**
5. **Learning**

Youth may also serve on the Youth –Adult Council (YAC) which meets once/month to help guide youth activities in each of the five areas of ministry. Youth may also participate in various district and regional youth conferences -- “Cons”. Last year our youth group planned and hosted the Fall Central Midwest District Youth Con for 250 youth and advisors.

