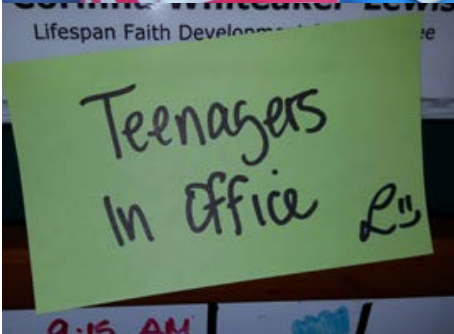




FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
CHURCH OF AUSTIN

Lifespan Faith Development Participant Handbook



Children and parents, welcome to Lifespan Faith Development!

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin

Welcome to Lifespan Faith Development for children and youth at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin! If you are new to our church community, I am overjoyed that your family is joining us! If you have been attending, I hope you and your family's connection and commitment to our community deepens through the programming we offer.

At First UU Church of Austin, we give our children guidance about what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist, as well as give them experiences that awaken curiosity and nurture questioning as they continue their lifelong journeys of spiritual development. We have lively, engaging Sunday School classes, children's choirs, intergenerational services and activities, and more that all contribute to the growth of each and every member of First UU — including our lil' UUs.

The most important parts of our Lifespan Faith Development programming are made possible by you, the members of this congregation. If you have a proposal for a class you would like to teach, would like to be in one of the kid's classrooms as a teacher or classroom helper on Sunday, help with events like Easter, the Valentines-Making Party and Christmas, or help out with office and administrative work during the week — your involvement and contributions make it all happen! Please contact me to get more information about getting involved in our amazing Lifespan Faith Development programming.

In fellowship,

Laine Young

Interim Director of Lifespan Faith Development



Lifespan Faith Development Staff Members

*Interim Director of
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The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

For adults:



For kids:



The Sources of our Living Tradition

Our Mission

At First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, we gather in community to nourish souls, transform lives, and do justice.

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote seven Principles, which we hold as strong values and moral guides. We live out these Principles within a “living tradition” of wisdom and spirituality, drawn from sources as diverse as science, poetry, scripture, and personal experience. These are the six sources our congregations affirm and promote:

- 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.



Our Values

- **Transcendence** – To connect with wonder and awe of the unity of life
- **Community** – To connect with joy, sorrow, and service with those whose lives we touch
- **Compassion** – To treat ourselves and others with love
- **Courage** – To live lives of honesty, vulnerability, and beauty
- **Transformation** – To pursue the growth that changes our lives and heals our world



A Covenant of Healthy Relations

As a religious community, we promise:

To Welcome and Serve

- By being intentionally hospitable to all people of good will
- By being present with one another through life's transitions
- By encouraging the spiritual growth of people of all ages



To Nurture and Protect

- By communicating with one another directly in a spirit of compassion and good will
- By speaking when silence would inhibit progress
- By disagreeing from a place of curiosity and respect
- By interrupting hurtful interactions when we witness them
- By expressing our appreciation to each other



To Sustain and Build

- By affirming our gratitude with generous gifts of time, talent and money for our Beloved Community
- By honoring our commitments to ourselves and one another for the sake of our own integrity and that of our congregation
- By forgiving ourselves and others when we fall short of expectations, showing good humor and the optimism required for moving forward



Thus do we covenant with one another.



Inside Our Classrooms

Tapestry of Faith Curriculum Series

Our chosen curricula for grades K–5 is part of our Unitarian Universalist Association’s new series, Tapestry of Faith, designed to nurture UU identity, spiritual growth, a transforming faith and vital communities of justice and love. All the curricula offer a grounding in Unitarian Universalist identity while using rituals, hands-on activities, and stories from a variety of cultures and faith traditions. Curriculum topics help children explore questions like, “What does it mean to be a UU? What do UUs believe? What is justice? And how do we put our faith into action?” We encourage them to explore how we practice our faith in our lives and in the world. Best of all, these curricula are available for free, online, and are customizable to suit classrooms and individuals. You can view this curricula at www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith.

Written by Unitarian Universalist religious educators, the Tapestry of Faith series offers clear lesson plans, a host of activity choices for all learning styles, a faith-in-action component, and spiritual preparation for teachers. Parents are provided with a week-by-week curriculum plan as well as weekly classroom updates and resources to the classroom into the home.

Included in this handbook should be an insert with the latest class curriculum. You may also find it the weekly order of service, or on our website: www.austinuu.org/wp2013/?p=6583.



Family Involvement

Lifelong learning, especially where our youth are concerned, is a cooperative venture. We need the help of our entire church community to make our program a success. In order to ensure our success, we expect if you have a child or youth in the program, you will volunteer at least 8 hours to the LFD program during the school year.

Please fill out the Family Involvement form, which is included with the enrollment paperwork, to let us know how you would like to help the LFD program. Here are some examples of volunteer offerings available:

Educators Team

Lead Teacher, 6–8 hours/month

The lead teacher works with the Lifespan Faith Development dept. on the lesson plan for their class each week and leads the lesson for their classroom every Sunday. Curricula, training, and tons of support are provided! This is an August–May commitment.

Classroom Helper, 1–2 hours/month

We need two adults in each classroom on Sunday to help ensure the safety of all children. You will work with our lead teachers and help in your child's classroom, or assist in one of our other amazing Sunday School classes!

Middle/High School Adviser, 2–6 hours/month

Help lead weekly Sunday meetings and plan social activities for our middle school or high school youth group. Requires 1–2 hour commitment Sunday mornings, as well as weekend events and lock-ins, based on needs & desires of the group. Advisers will tell you they have the most fun of all getting to know our brilliant and talented teens! All advisers attend annual orientation.



Substitute Teacher (varies)

Be ready to step in and cover for absent lead teachers, classroom helpers, or advisers. Training is provided before you begin.

Lead Summer Teacher, 6 hours/month

The lead teacher works with the Lifespan Faith Development dept. on the lesson plan for their class each week and leads the lesson for their classroom every Sunday during the summer session. Curricula, training, and tons of support are provided! This is a June–August commitment.

Wednesday Night Teacher, 2–8 hours/month

As a member of the Wednesday night teacher team, you will help lead our weekly Wonderful Wednesdays class for grades K–4. Topics will range from Tapestry of Faith curricula, social action and justice, arts & crafts, and gardening. Must be available to teach at least one Wednesday each month, September–May.

Family Involvement, continued

Special Events Coordinator

Coming of Age Coordinator, varies monthly

This coordinator will work with the Interim Director of Lifespan Education with the planning and implementation of the church's Coming of Age program! Tasks will include reviewing curricula, helping find mentors, and assistance with scheduling.

Church Mouse Coordinator, varies monthly

This coordinator will work with the Interim Director of Lifespan Education to plan and implement a First UU Austin Church Mouse program! The Church Mouse program is for our bridged high school seniors: adults in the congregation "adopt" a youth and send them notes and small gifts throughout the year. The Church Mouse Coordinator will assist with things such as getting high school interest surveys from the bridged youth, finding adult participants, and making sure that all youth are getting communication from their Church Mouse.

Sunday LFD Info Table Greeter, 1–4 hrs/month

Help spread the word about up-and-coming events at First UU! The Sunday LFD Greeter stays at the LFD table in the gallery on Sundays to inform families and guests about events and activities. Shifts are 8:50–9:15, 10:15–10:45, and 11:45–noon.

Research Team, varies monthly

Help investigate best religious education practices, etc. implemented in other UU churches. The Research team works with the Lifespan Faith Development dept. and discusses current research projects/needs via a Facebook group, then assists in the research process.

Congregational Events Team, varies monthly

Spearhead or help out with a Lifespan Faith Development event like the Tree Trimming Party, Surprise Pals, Valentines Making Party, Easter, or Splash Day. Time commitment varies per event, can range from 2–8 hours an event.

LFD Office Team, varies monthly

Are you a whiz at organizational tasks and available during the week? This may be the perfect serving opportunity for you! Time varies from 1–4 hours a month.

Our Whole Lives Facilitator, varies monthly

Teach one or more levels of our church's comprehensive sexuality education program. Time commitment ranges between grade levels. Please note: you must attend an Our Whole Lives (OWL) facilitator training before joining this team (*see pg. 10*).



In addition to volunteering, families participating in the LFD program are also expected to comply with the following.

Attendance & Attire

Come regularly. Children develop a sense of belonging through regular attendance. A child who attends regularly not only gets more out of the curriculum, but also feels more connected to their classmates and the church. Parents who possess an attitude of cheerful expectancy about weekly church school attendance will have fewer difficulties with their children's involvement each Sunday. We hope that your family will make church a priority in your lives.

A lot of classes involve hands-on learning, so dress your kids in comfortable clothing that is okay to get messy!

Introduce Yourself to Your Children's Teachers

Teachers are forming relationships with your children and they want to meet you, too. The LFD staff is also interested in hearing from you. Look over available literature and follow your child's class activities.

Arrival and Pick-Up

Children go to class after the "Story for All Ages" during Sunday services. They meet with their teacher and fellow classmates in the gallery, then all go to the classroom together. Parents/guardians are more than welcome to walk with their children to classroom.

Please note that class goes 15 minutes past when service ends: 10:30 AM for first service, and noon for second service. Parents/guardians are encouraged to enjoy some coffee and fellowship in Howson Hall during this time. Children in nursery–5th grade cannot be picked up from class by an older sibling, they must be picked up by a parent/guardian.

Transitions

Whether your child is new to neighborhood, or moving up a grade level into a new class, transitions can be scary. Prepare your child for the change by talking with them about what to expect. Parents/guardians are always welcome to stay with their child in the classroom for as long as it takes to get them situated.



Our Whole Lives (OWL) Program

Honest, accurate information about sexuality changes lives. It dismantles stereotypes and assumptions, builds self-acceptance and self-esteem, fosters healthy relationships, and improves decision making. For these reasons and more, we are proud to offer Our Whole Lives (OWL), a comprehensive, lifespan sexuality education curricula for use in both secular settings and faith communities.

Interactive workshops and lessons engage participants, and step-by-step instructions for program planners and facilitators help ensure success. Of the available six OWL curricula for various age groups, First UU currently provides grades 7–9 and 10–12.

OWL helps participants make informed, responsible decisions regarding sexual health and behavior. With a holistic approach, OWL provides accurate, developmentally appropriate information about a range of topics: relationships, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual health, and cultural influences on sexuality.



OWL offers:

- Accurate information presented in developmentally appropriate ways
- Affective and emotional learning
- Guiding values and principles
- Activities that help participants clarify values and improve decision-making skills
- A safe and supportive peer group
- Acceptance of diversity
- Social justice approach to inclusive sexuality education
- Step-by-step instructions for program promotion, implementation, and facilitation
- Parent orientation that affirms parents as their children's primary sexuality educators
- Facilitator trainings and continuing education to increase knowledge, skills, confidence

- Expert user support from OWL Program Associate (UUA) and OWL Program Coordinator (UCC)
- Sexuality and Our Faith, an optional religious supplement for use in UU settings

OWL values:

While OWL is secular, it is not value-free. OWL gives clear messages about the following key sexuality issues:

- Self-worth
- Responsibility
- Sexual health
- Justice & inclusivity

OWL recognizes and respects the diversity of participants with respect to biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and disability status. The activities and language used throughout the program have been carefully chosen to be as inclusive as possible of this human diversity.

Childcare

First UU holds two nurseries for taking care of our littlest UUs. The nursery rooms are located in rooms 19 and 21, on the west wing of the building.

Besides our regular Pre-K to Kindergarten classes on Sundays, we also provide childcare for little ones as requested for various church events. To make a childcare reservation, or for general nursery/childcare questions, contact the First UU Childcare Coordinator: childcare@austinuu.org.

First UU's Nursery provides care for our youngest UUs, ages newborn to 3 years old. In addition to two large classrooms, the children have opportunities for outside play on our spacious, fully enclosed playground.

If your child is mobile, s/he will be offered the choice of outside play, weather permitting. Please provide a coat or jacket for your child in colder months, and provide sunscreen (bring in or have your child pre-sunscreened upon arrival). To protect your little ones' tender feet, we ask that shoes be worn when on our playground.

Childcare can be requested for church-sponsored activities. Please contact the event coordinator/chairperson if childcare will be needed for your family.



First UU of Austin

