

# FAITH FORMATION at FIRST PARISH in BROOKLINE

## Ages 0-5

**Combined Nursery and Pre-School (Celebrating Me and My World)** - because we have small classes in this age group we are combining the two groups together to better utilize space and volunteer resources.  
Ages 0-5

**Nursery:** for our youngest participants this is a play group supervised by a team of caring paid staff and volunteers. Parents are invited to stay until their children are comfortable being independent in the nursery.

**Celebrating Me and My World:** Each session helps children identify with their classmates and religious community, affirm acceptance of one another, and nurtures spiritual and ethical growth. UU principles and values that are implicitly promoted include the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity, and compassion in human relations; and respect for the interdependent web of existence.

## Grades K-1

**Spirit Play:** a UU Montessori Method approach to supporting children's spiritual inquiry. The purpose of the class is to help children find their own answers to such questions as "Where did we come from?" "What is our purpose?" "How do we choose to live our lives?" "What are our gifts and how do we choose to use them?" By helping children value their individual gifts and work together as community, they learn to support each other and respect one another's quest to understand "the Mystery that some people call God." Each week, a story based on one of the UU principles is told by a teacher, and afterwards, kids are asked "wondering questions", as in "I wonder how that felt". We then do a group or individual activity, so the kids can socialize and get to know one another.

## Grades 2-3

**Moral Tales:** attempts to provide children with the spiritual and ethical tools they will need to make choices and take actions reflective of their Unitarian Universalist beliefs and values. As the name implies, each session contains a story and multiple activities through which the elementary students explore their beliefs and identify the underlying values.

## Grades 4-5

**Toolbox of Faith:** invites participants to reflect on the qualities of our Unitarian Universalist faith, such as integrity, courage, and love, as tools they can use in living their lives and building their own faith. Each of the sessions uses a tool as a metaphor for an important quality of our faith such as reflection (symbolized by a mirror), or justice (a flashlight). At the end of the year the students will use the tools from the session to create a project relating to their faith.

## The Coming of Age Years

## Grades 6-7

**Neighboring Faiths:** Explores the religions of today's world and our relationship to them. Part religious literacy, part developing an understanding of UU, this program engages participants with religions on many levels. Youth will recognize the human needs religion serves in a historical context, while examining the most popular religions today. Acknowledging that facts and figures are not enough, youth will engage in the spiritual practices and worship of the varying faith traditions by visiting houses of worship. Integral to understanding the other religious traditions is that youth learn about this church and faith so that they can identify the similarities and differences.

### **Grade 8**

**Our Whole Lives (OWL):** Comprehensive human sexuality program with up-to-date information and honest, age-appropriate answers to all participants' questions. Activities help participants clarify values and improve decision-making skills.

### **Grade 9**

**Challenge:** Our UU community has a long commitment to the journey of youth to articulate what they have given their heart to. Through rigorous experiential learning, peer and mentor discussions, spiritual guidance, and worship -- our year-long Challenge experience will guide youth to answer the questions: What is my spiritual practice? Who are the people that I connect with in my faith community? How might I live out my faith in the world? This program culminates with the youth offering a worship service in which they share their Faith Statements with the congregation.

### **Grades 10-12**

**Senior High Youth Ministry:** The group determines the ministry they would like to create incorporating the UUA recommended eight components of Dynamic Youth Ministry: Spiritual Development, Beloved Community, Justice Making, Faith Exploration, Multigenerational Relationships, Covenantal Leadership, Identity Formation and Pastoral Care.

### **Special Sundays**

**All Community Worship:** our All Community Worship Services play an important role as we learn to live as one whole community of faith. The children and youth are with parents in the sanctuary for the worship service. They join in the flow of the church year, they develop relationships with all the adults, they participate as needed or able, they enjoy the music, they see first-hand the meaning of church to adults.

### **Multi-age Activities for grades K-12**

**Chapel Sunday:** is a children and youth worship service followed by a Faith in Action experience. We begin in the Sanctuary and when the children and youth are sung out they all come into Lyon Chapel for a 20-30 minute worship. Following or as part of the worship, we participate in an activity to deepen our understanding and engagement with the theme which has been presented. (also referred to as Children's Chapel ) 4 times a year

**Justice Seeking Sunday:** these are Sundays where we begin in worship and when the children and youth are sung out they go to Pierce Hall to learn about a current issue of Social Justice and ways we can create change. There is an opportunity to more deeply explore the topics, and to do some hands on work to help heal the world. Four of these are topic based, relating to the worship service that day. Additionally, the Thanksgiving Feast and Final Picnic Sundays involve service to this community by helping to prepare food, decorate tables, set up supplies, create activities for younger children.