



First Parish in Brookline

A WELCOMING UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

2016-2017

Family Handbook

2016-17 Religious Exploration Committee

Nate Freitas, Co-Chair
Rich Day, Co-Chair

Liaisons to Classes

Ann Harvey Kilburn, Liaison to *Celebrating Me and My World*
Jaime Kim, Liaison to *Spirit Play*
Elizabeth McIntire and Karley Ausiello, Liaisons to *Moral Tales*
Margaret Williams, Liaison to *Toolbox of Faith*
Anne Brown, Liaison to *Neighboring Faiths*
Bijan Etemad-Gilbertson, Liaison to *Our Whole Lives*
Jonathan Richardson, Liaison to *Challenge*

Rebecca Keller Scholl, Director of Religious Exploration

TABLE OF CONTENTS

From The Director.....	Page 3
What is a Cooperative RE Program?.....	Page 4
Communication.....	Page 5
RE Teachers and Liaisons.....	Page 6
First Parish In Brookline Offerings in Faith Formation.....	Page 8
Miscellaneous Information.....	Page 9
Safe Congregations Practices.....	Page 10
Comprehensive RE Policy.....	Page 11



From the Director of Religious Exploration...

Welcome to the 2016-17 First Parish in Brookline church year! I hope that your experience in this faith community is deeply rewarding. Walking with children on their journey of faith formation is sacred work, and one that we all take quite seriously. We continue to focus on the best ways to create an intentional time and place for each of us to ask the deepest questions from within ourselves and of the universe, as we open to the quest for truth, meaning, and the wonder of mystery.

First Parish is in the midst of growth – both in spirit and numbers. With each year, we learn more about the path of lifespan religious education, using curricula that best matches our vision of personal, spiritual and community growth. The rituals and intentions we bring to our gatherings are what make our faith community a place of inspiration and belonging, respite and reverence. If I can be of support to you and your family, please contact me, either by email - DRE@firstparishinbrookline.org, or on my cell phone at 617-383-4673. I work 30 hours per week and am at the church on most Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays. Thank you for joining in our community of learners as we walk together on the journey of discovery.

In faith,

Rebecca Keller Scholl
Director of Religious Exploration

Religious Exploration Committee Goals for 2016-17

The Religious Exploration Committee serves the congregation by implementing faith formation programs for children and youth which will:

- Intentionally support child-child and child-adult relationships so that each child and youth is known by name, knows others by name, and knows at least a few others well.
- Teach children and their families about the Unitarian Universalist Religion (including heritage, theology, and the 7 principles and 6 sources).
- Engage other members of congregation in understanding and participating in the faith formation of our children and youth.
- Provide a welcoming and safe environment that fosters for children and youth a sense of this being their church home.

What is a Cooperative RE Program?

A cooperative RE program is a comprehensive faith formation experience which is developmentally appropriate for the different ages and stages in the lives of children and youth. The program is led by the Religious Exploration Committee with the support and guidance of a professional religious educator who is part of the staff and worship teams. Our classrooms are staffed by volunteers who receive curriculum, training, enrichment and support throughout the year. The Director of Religious Exploration is responsible for children and youth from Birth through high school and plans the spiritual development arc of the program, creates and selects curriculum, designs social action projects for children and youth and manages the administration of the RE Program. All parents/guardians are asked to volunteer in some way with the RE program every year.

Religious Exploration at First Parish in Brookline

The children and youth at First Parish in Brookline is embraced by the community as a place of connection and growth at every age. The Religious Exploration program helps each person develop a respect for her or his own self-worth, concern for others, an enjoyment and appreciation of worship, reverence for the sacred and all life, rich and meaningful spiritual life, and an enduring connection with Unitarian Universalism. Regular attendance builds community and helps children learn, and feel safe, secure and connected. We seek to assist each child in nurturing a spiritual life, ethical awareness, and a Unitarian Universalist identity. We offer a Faith Formation experience drawn from our Unitarian Universalist traditions, which affirms the great spiritual truths of all religions. Structured learning opportunities provide our children with an environment in which they explore, examine, learn and play with friends in age-appropriate groupings. Members of this community volunteer to teach, and in doing so, are able to learn and deepen their own spiritual connections. Monthly Multigenerational Worship provides families the opportunity to share in the mystery and wonder of spiritual exploration, experience the traditions and rituals of worship, learn UU hymns and responsive readings, and have the chance to deepen their faith experience together.

Our volunteer teachers at First Parish in Brookline are guided by these principles:

- Provide safety and security for all of the children
- Focus on being together in community Value the child
- Cherish the moment
- Bring your highest self to teaching
- Listen with/without questioning

About Curricula and Lesson Plans...

The Religious Exploration Committee and the Director of Religious Exploration review and select the curricula designed to best meet Program Goals. Most curricula are revisions or combinations of material developed by the Unitarian Universalist Lifespan Faith Development or material designed by religious educators from other congregations. Every effort is made to provide for different learning styles and include a variety of approaches to accommodate the range of children who are in the group. To support the best talents and creative styles of adults leading in the classroom, teaching teams are encouraged to adapt class lessons and projects. Teachers are also invited to “close the book” when the class members seem to be engaged in a meaningful discussion or activity that isn’t necessarily in the plan for the day.

How is class placement decided...

Children are generally grouped together by grade in school. Typically there are two grades in one class, though sometimes there are three. When possible we make an effort to separate siblings so they may each develop their own relationships with peers and adults. The final decision for all class placements lies with the Director of Religious Exploration.

Communication

In our fast paced and technological world there are many ways to stay informed. To ensure that families receive all the the information necessary to stay informed and included in the life of the congregation and the Religious Exploration, and protect the privacy of our members, we use class listservs for all class communications. When a child is registered in a class all parent/guardian email address that are provided are added to the appropriate class listserv. If you are not receiving listserv notifications please contact the church administrator or assist@firstparishinbrookline.org, to be added or removed.

How will I know what is happening in class?

Teachers typically communicate with the parents/guardians twice a week, once before the class to let you know what is coming up so you can share it with your child, and once following the class, so you can have an informed discussion with your child about what occurred in class on Sunday.

Celebrating Me and My World
Spirit Play
Moral Tales
Toolbox of Faith
Neighboring Faiths
Our Whole Lives (OWL)
Challenge
Senior High Youth

memyworld@firstparishinbrookline.org
spiritplay@firstparishinbrookline.org
moraltales@firstparishinbrookline.org
toolbox@firstparishinbrookline.org
neighboringfaiths@firstparishinbrookline.org
owl@firstparishinbrookline.org
challenge@firstparishinbrookline.org
youth@firstparishinbrookline.org

Who should I talk to if I have a question?

The teachers want to know you as well as your children, so please make an effort to introduce yourselves to them. If you are curious about what is happening in your child's class, please see the teacher after class for more information, or email the teacher listserv. You may also check in with the class REC Liaison for more information.

RE TEACHERS 2016-17

Class, Contact Information

RE CLASS

CELEBRATING ME AND MY WORLD (MMW)

(Nursery to Pre-School)

TEACHER NAME

Leslie Spaneas

Don Kilburn

Ingrid Johansson

Laura Walters

Tara Washburn

Listservs:

Staff

Julia Brasor

memyworld@firstparishinbrookline.org

Rec Liaison

Ann Harvey
Kilburn

memyworldteachers@firstparishinbrookline.org

SPIRIT PLAY (SP)

(K to 1st Grade)

Need one more teacher

Alice Mark

Carrie Thompson-
Grove

Charissa Benak

Gene Thompson-
Grove

Micaela Coady

Rob Guillemin

Listservs:

Rec Liaison

Jaime Kim

spiritplay@firstparishinbrookline.org

spteachers@firstparishinbrookline.org

MORAL TALES (MT)

(Grades 2-3)

Andrea Willett

Erin Kelly

Jennifer Lakins

Jessica

Henderson

Matt Brackett

Michael Leidig

	Michael Monroe Sarah Griffin Suzanne Federspiel Tim Dailey	
Rec Liaison	Elizabeth McIntire Karley Ausiello	Listervs: moraltales@firstparishinbrookline.org moraltalesteachers@firstparishinbrookline.org
TOOLBOX OF FAITH (TF) <i>(Grades 4-5)</i>	Beth Daley Jennifer Goulart Jessica Alm Matt O'Rourke Patricia Kinsella	
Rec Liaison	Margaret Williams	Listserv toolbox@firstparishinbrookline.org toolboxteachers@firstparishinbrookline.org
NEIGHBORING FAITHS (NF) <i>(Grades 6-7)</i>	Cath Cappelli Larry Zaborski Mary Rogers Monica Brady-Myeroff	
Rec Liaison	Anne Brown	Listervs neighboringfaiths@firstparishinbrookline.org nfteachers@firstparishinbrookline.org
OUR WHOLE LIVES (OWL) <i>(Grade 8)</i>	Ethan Brackett Jon Hazilla Susan Larabee	
Rec Liaison	Bijan Etemad-Gilbertson	Listervs owl-owner@firstparishinbrookline.org owlteachers@firstparishinbrookline.org
CHALLENGE (CH) <i>(Grade 9)</i>	Meredith Hall Andrew Maryniuk	
Rec Liaison	Jonathan Richardson	Listervs: challenge@firstparishinbrookline.org chalteachers@firstparishinbrookline.org

YOUTH GROUP (HSY)
(Grades 10-12)

Priscilla Brown
Wendy Swart
Grossman

Listservs

youth@firstparishinbrookline.org

Rec Liaison

Jeff Cadow

youthteachers@firstparishinbrookline.org

Faith Formation at First Parish in Brookline 2016-17

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. *Meets in the Tree Room*

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. *Meets in Balcony Room*

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. *Meets in Skylight Room*

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. *Meets in Pierce Hall*

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. *Meets in Meditation Lounge*

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. *Meets in Dana Room*

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. *Meets in Lilac Lounge*

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. *Meets on Peterson Couches*

Miscellaneous Information

Food

Light snacks are provided for **Nursery, Pre-School and Spirit Play** classes. All other participants enjoy food at social hour with everyone. Please have your child eat a full breakfast before attending so they can fully participate in the activities of the day. If you have a child with a food allergy please bring a snack in a marked container for your child so we can reduce any risk to your child's well being.

Diapers

If you sign the nursery release we will change diapers in the nursery. Please check to make sure your child arrives with a clean diaper and, if they are able, consider taking them to the toilet before they enter the room.

Distraught Child

We will make every effort to help your child acclimate to the group and activities, and use our best judgement regarding effectiveness. If deemed appropriate we will contact you in worship and ask you to step out to attend to your child. Please leave your cell phone on vibrate as this is the fastest way for us to contact you.

Drop Off and Pick Up

Nursery and PreSchool

A parent/guardian must drop off and pick up a child in the Nursery. You are always welcome to stay in the nursery with your child if this will help them settle. The nursery is open from 10:45 - 12:30; on two Sundays a month multi-age childcare takes place in the nursery after worship to support parent/guardian(s) who are attending after church meetings, classes and discussions. Space is limited and sign up is required.

K through 7 begin in worship at 11:00 am.

Children participate in the first 15 minutes of worship. This time includes the welcome of all people, our church covenant and the lighting of the chalice, music and a Time for All Ages or the sharing of Candles of Joys and Concerns, followed by the children ceremoniously departing the sanctuary following the shared light of our chalice as the congregation sings *Go Now in Peace*.

Spirit Play and Moral Tales

The Spirit Play and Moral Tales children participate in the first 15 minutes of worship. parent/guardian(s) then escort their child to class. Children need to be picked up immediately following the end of worship and before going to social hour. Spirit Play children are picked up at the door to Pierce Hall, Moral Tales children are released once worship has ended and parent/guardian(s) meet them at the bottom of the stairs to the balcony room or at a specified location that the parent/guardian and child agree upon.

All students 4th grade and higher

Children participate in the first 15 minutes of worship. parent/guardian(s) may escort their child to

class, or if they feel comfortable the child may go on their own to class. There will not be anyone monitoring whether the child has arrived - so please consider your child's level of responsibility, risk taking and use of good judgement when making this decision. This class is released to find their parent/guardian(s) in Social Hour - please discuss a specified location that the parent/guardian and child agree upon to meet in Lyon Chapel.

On multigenerational Sundays grades K-12 participate in worship.

Right Relations: Safe Congregation Practices and Policies

In the spirit of creating intentional and meaningful community, the Religious Exploration Committee and the Parish Committee promote and uphold practices, guidelines, and policies to ensure the emotional and physical safety of everyone in our church community. In addition to the church policies, each class creates their own covenant to establish the framework for a classroom where the expectations for behavior and relationships are communicated in a way that children can understand.

Church Behavior Guidelines Based on our 7 Unitarian Universalist Principles

- 1) We believe that each and every person is important.
 - Only gentle play is appropriate on church grounds
 - Treat everyone with respect
 - Use caring language and behavior
 - Include others in your play and activities
- 2) We believe that all people should be treated fairly and kindly.
 - Listen and follow directions
 - Be polite
 - Take turns
 - Care about one another
 - Do not brag
- 3) We believe that we should accept one another and keep on learning together.
 - Try to come to church regularly; your friends and teachers depend upon you
 - Include everyone in activities and planning
 - Friends are welcome
 - Let them know our rules
 - Participate with enthusiasm
- 4) We believe that each person is free to search for what is true and right in life.
 - Share your ideas
 - Respect the ideas of others

5) We believe that all persons should have the right to speak out and have a vote about what concerns them.

- Express your opinions constructively
- Respect the decision of the group

6) We believe in working for a peaceful, fair and free world.

- Ask for help when you need it
- Do your best to get along with others and to be helpful
- Be willing to listen to reminders about your behavior

7) We believe in caring for our earth, we share our home with all living things.

- Take good care of our church
- Help clean up
- Be careful with our space, furniture and materials
- Use only what you need
- Be gentle with the plants and animals

Addressing Breach of Covenant

If classroom covenant is not followed there is a three-part response procedure.

1. ***Part One*** - if a problem arises, they will refer to the Covenant (class guidelines) and specify which one(s) is/are not being followed. If the problem continues, give **one verbal warning**.
2. ***Part Two*** - If the problem still continues, **remove the child from class to the care of the Director of Religious Exploration (DRE) or designated person**. The DRE will discuss behavior with child and either the child will be returned to classroom or child will be returned to their parent/guardian immediately, even if it means they are called out of the service.
3. ***Part Three*** - if a child is sent to the Director of Religious Exploration a second time, a meeting will be scheduled with all parties to develop a partnership plan for improvement.

COMPREHENSIVE RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION POLICY

Scope of Policy: This policy covers only official programs of the Religious Exploration program. The Religious Exploration team is responsible for all participants who are attending official religious education programs while parents are responsible for their children when they are not attending their registered class.

Terms:

- Supervisor: A designated First Parish in Brookline adult (over 18 years of age)
- Participants: A member of the Religious Exploration program

Adult Supervision and Safety:

Adult supervision is an opportunity for mentorship, modeling and building intergenerational relationship. To insure adequate and safe supervision, Table 1 indicates the minimum ratio of adults to participants that will be maintained at all times in the classroom environment.

Table 1		
Age Group	Adults	Participants
Nursery	1	3
Preschool	1	5
Elementary	1	7
Middle School	1	8
High School	1	10

In addition to ratios, Adult Supervisors must meet and respect the following conditions:

1. Supervisors should never be alone with a participant one on one. The only exception is when they are in an 'observable space' - a space that can be easily seen by others, for example the lounge area of a room when the doors are open.
2. Supervisors should have a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check, with a copy kept on record by the church. If a Supervisor does not have a CORI they must always be paired with a supervisor who does.
3. Supervisors should be over the age of 25. If a supervisor is not over the age of 25 they are to be paired with another supervisor over the age of 25.
4. During overnights at the church all supervisors must have a CORI on record.
5. All Our Whole Lives classes must have two CORI checked supervisors at all times.

The church completes a CORI check in order to gain information about a person's interactions with the legal system. If an individual's CORI check contains interactions with the legal system it is up to the Minister to decide about that person's involvement in the religious education programming. The Minister will consider the applicability and impact of the information obtained for the role they are seeking to fulfill in the Religious Exploration program in determining if they will be allowed to participate.

Participant Conduct Requirements:

Participants can only register in a Religious Exploration program aimed at their target age group; only the Director of Religious Exploration permits exceptions. To insure the safety of all participants in our whole church community, the following are considered intolerable and are strictly forbidden while on the Church premises:

Possession of any of the following:

- weapons of any kind
- materials for producing fire
- illegal drugs
- inappropriate materials for age, including cigarettes and sexually explicit materials not used as part of approved curriculum
- playing with matches, or fire, unless lighting a chalice in a group with permission from leader or teacher

Intolerable behavior includes the following:

- violent behavior towards oneself or others
- inappropriate sexual behavior
- threats or threatening behavior
- leaving supervised areas (classrooms, playground, church buildings, and patios) without approval from teacher or parent
- destruction of personal or church property
- physically aggressive play, without the permission of teacher or church

Healing from Breaches of Standards

The process of healing from breaching of behavior standards for all ages is outlined in the Congregations `Conflict and Disruptive Behavior Policy

Communication Policy

Communicating with participants and their guardians is essential for a vibrant program. The aim of this policy is to balance the need for effective communication with the responsibility of the church to keep guardians informed and maintain accountability for safe communication. All church communication from staff must come through officially designated channels. Personal email addresses or Facebook accounts should never be used to communicate with any participants. All church communication with participants below the age to participate in the Challenge Class will always be copied to the participant's guardian including: emails, letters, text messages, and Facebook messages or posts, among others. All church communication, including from volunteers and Challenge Class mentors, with participants in the Challenge Class and those aged above is not mandated to be copied to the participant's guardian. All communication will follow the Communication Values and Guideline statement as listed below:

General Values and Guidelines

- Keep all communication related to the church program you are involved in.
- The best use of electronic communication is to facilitate face to face meeting.
- Volunteers should take great care over the language used to reduce misinterpretation.
- Limit the time of communication to between 8am and 8pm.
- Consider carefully and consult with a staff member before responding to any request to connect on social media with a youth. It is inadvisable to initiate a request with a youth on social media.
- All communication should be kept confidential unless it contains disclosure of harm including: self-harm, harm to another, or harm done to a youth.

Challenge Class Mentors

Must be a member of First Parish in Brookline to fill role of mentor.

However, in unique circumstances, a mentor can be a member of another Unitarian Universalist congregation if required. Unique circumstance might include a student with special needs who would require a mentor with particular skills not available in this congregation, or a child who has left the area but wanted to "graduate" with their class and could accomplish this by working with a mentor from another congregation. All mentors must have a valid CORI check.

Driving and Transportation Policy

All transportation for special events sponsored by the First Parish in Brookline for children and youth shall be provided/supervised by adults associated with the Parish. Special events shall include field trips, youth conferences and evening/overnight events held at the Parish building. A driver must meet the following criteria to be allowed to provide transportation:

1. All adult drivers must have a valid drivers license.
2. Vehicles used must be currently licensed and have current inspection stickers.
3. There must be a functional seat belt available for each occupant. In the case of younger children, child car seats must be used.
4. If the driver does not have a CORI on record with the church they must not be the only adult supervisor in the car. Additionally they cannot be related to the other adult.
5. If the driver has a CORI on record with the church, they can transport more than one participant.
6. No driver, regardless of circumstances, is allowed to transport a participant to an event by themselves.
7. A driver under the age of 25, who meets the above conditions, must have the written permission from all legal guardians of those they are transporting.

This policy does not apply to regular Sunday meetings at First Parish these are not considered to be special events.

Photo and Video Use Policy

First Parish in Brookline is a caring community and sanctuary for diversity. Publishing photos and videos of worship and other church-related activities is an important part of staying true to our identity and carrying out our mission.

First Parish in Brookline has an "opt-out" photo and video policy. Therefore, photos and videos may be taken and published of any individual unless a written statement requests otherwise. Publishing of photos and videos includes, but is not limited to, posting on our website and social media, inclusion in e-mails, and inclusion in print media.

Published photos and videos will adhere to the following guidelines:

- First Parish in Brookline will not knowingly publish anything that would be embarrassing, objectionable, or hurtful to anyone in the photo.
- First Parish in Brookline understands that worship service is an intimate experience to many. Therefore, published photos and videos taken during worship services will typically be of people reading, singing, and playing music.
- First Parish in Brookline will not identify minors by name, parents' names, or other personal information in the photos and videos we post online. (Minors are defined as children under the age of 18. Additionally, young adults participating as a youth in a youth program, regardless of age, will also be considered "minors." For example, youth in high school often turn 18 their senior year. They will be treated as "minors" until they graduate and no longer participate in the senior high youth group and other youth programming.)
- Adults may be identified in photos and videos. Past photos and videos showing children that have since aged into legal adults may also be identified.
- First Parish in Brookline will gladly remove any photo or video for any reason upon request. The concerned individual should contact the Church Office.

Because privacy is a greater concern with minors, youth-specific activities will remind parents of this "opt-out" photo and video policy on the registration form.