

POLICIES FOR THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF TUCSON

I. Guiding Principles

The Vision Statement of the Lifespan Faith Development Program of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson

Our lifespan learning community seeks to nurture and stimulate the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social growth of people of all ages, stages of faith, and levels of religious experience. We envision a program that is rooted in a free and responsible search for meaning that through the thoughts and actions of our lives, transforms us, our community, and our world.

The Mission Statement of the Lifespan Faith Development Program of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson

In order to nurture and stimulate the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social growth of all seekers, the Lifespan Faith Development (LFD) Program will provide a balance of learning, leadership, social justice, worship, community building, and intergenerational connections within a welcoming, covenantal community.

The LFD Program will be woven with the following strands:

- Unitarian Universalist (UU) Identity and Beliefs, emphasizing our UU Principles, history, heritage, and evolution of our faith;
- Sources of Wisdom, honoring the many sources of our Living Tradition;
- Life Transitions, providing a UU perspective for understanding, honoring, and celebrating life changes;
- Evolving Faith, continually developing and articulating one's UU beliefs and practices and integrating them into one's own life;
- Ministry and Leadership, exploring interests, developing skills, and sharing gifts with others to transform ourselves, our community, and the world.

Children's version of UU Principles

1. We believe that each and every person is important.
2. We believe that all people should be treated fairly.
3. We believe that our churches are places where all people are accepted and where we keep learning together.
4. We believe that each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.
5. We believe that everyone should have a vote about the things that concern them.
6. We believe in working for a peaceful, fair, and free world.
7. We believe in caring for our planet Earth.

We use the African proverb, "*It takes an entire village to raise one child*" to remind us that, as a community of faith, we share the responsibility for educating our children.

II. Structure of the Program

A. Religious Education (RE) Staff

1. The RE Staff collaborates with the RE Council in providing the RE Program.
2. The RE Council collaborates with the RE Staff concerning issues of policy and direction of the program. The RE Staff's duties and responsibilities are set forth in their job descriptions and in the policies set by the RE Council.

Revised and all changes approved by REC February 2010

Amended and approved by REC March 2011

Copies available in Church Governance, LFD, Membership/Community Life, and on our website.

3. The LFD Director (LFDD) is evaluated and supervised by the Minister. The RE Coordinator is evaluated and supervised by the LFDD.
- B. Authority**
1. The RE Staff is the ultimate authority on Sunday.
 2. The RE Staff and RE Council will appoint a substitute, if she/he will not be available, who will act in her/his place.
 3. Teachers are the authorities in their classrooms.
 4. Parents are responsible for their children unless they are in their classes, the nursery, or on the playground during playground hours. On the playground, children are under the supervision of teachers, designated RE parent-helpers, or the childcare staff and nursery supervisors.
- C. Religious Education Council**
1. The RE Council is responsible for defining the overall philosophy and vision of the RE Program and formulating policies to ensure that the mission and goals are effectively implemented.
 2. The RE Council is composed of at least six voting members, including a Chair, each of whom has responsibilities in one or more of the portfolios listed below. The RE Staff are non-voting members. A quorum is at least half of the voting members. All members of the congregation including the minister, parents and teachers are welcome to attend and participate in meetings.
 3. RE Council portfolio holders are empowered to recruit other congregants to help them, at their discretion, thus forming a committee.
 4. Standing Portfolios are:
 - a. RE Council Chair
 - b. RE Council Secretary
 - c. Curriculum
 - d. Social Justice
 - e. Youth Ministry
 - f. Family Ministry
 - g. OWL (Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education)
 - h. Worship
 - i. Summer Programs
 - j. Teacher Development and Support
 5. Areas of responsibility for each portfolio are laid out in a separate RE Council Portfolio document.
 6. At the March or April RE Council meeting, members will advise the Council regarding whether they plan to leave the Council or renew for an additional year of service.
 7. The RE Staff coordinates with the RE Council to submit a budget request to the Empowerment Team each year. Once the funds are approved by the congregation, the RE Staff and RE Council construct a final budget and the RE Staff are responsible for managing the allocated funds. Expenditures outside the normal operations of the RE Program will follow church policy #145 entitled "Expenditure Limits."
- D. Registration and Fees**
1. Registration consists of completing a registration form, signing a parent/guardian emergency authorization form and indicating how the parent/guardian will help with the program. The registration form also lists other adults who may bring the children to class and be responsible for them.
 2. Children and youth who are visiting the program are the responsibility of their host adult.
 3. Fees for any aspect of RE Programming will be set by the RE Council and reviewed on a regular basis.
 4. Fee Waivers may be granted by the RE Staff or Minister.

5. Attendance sheets are filled out each week by the teachers and collected by the RE Staff on a regular basis. All children and youth attending more than 3 times in a school year are strongly encouraged to register in the program.

E. Curriculum

1. An age appropriate curriculum is taught year round.
2. Curriculum for the school year (Aug-May) will be selected by the Curriculum Portfolio holder(s) and RE Staff.
3. The curriculum will be guided by the LFD Program's Mission & Vision Statements.

F. Young Religious Unitarian Universalist (YRUU) Program

1. YRUU programming will be self designed by youth and their advisors in collaboration, where appropriate, with the RE Council Youth Ministry portfolio holder and the RE Staff.
2. YRUU Programming will be guided by the LFD Program's Mission & Vision Statements and the mission-covenant of our church and will be comprehensive in nature to include the six areas of a balanced youth program:
 - a. Worship
 - b. Youth-Adult Relations
 - c. Community Building
 - d. Social Action
 - e. Learning
 - f. Leadership
3. Each year YRUU will lead a congregational worship service in collaboration with the minister.
4. The YRUU program will happen on Sunday mornings during Religious Education programming hours and during alternate programming times as chosen by the YRUU, including, but not limited to, overnights, field trips, social events, district events, social justice projects, and fundraising events.
5. The YRUU is lead by Youth Adult Committees, consisting of youth and adults working in collaboration in order to create a vibrant youth ministry. General YAC meetings will be held periodically throughout the year and event- or project-specific YACs will be formed on an as needed basis.
6. The YRUU Program is committed to supporting all the youth of our community in the many ways that they can be involved in congregational life.
7. So that the boundary between youth and adult is clear, at least one youth advisor must be age 25 or over. Ideally, both advisors should be age 25 or over; however, a qualified adult at least 5 years older than the youth can co-lead a high school program in collaboration with a qualified adult 25 or over.

III. That All May Be Welcome

In keeping with our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person, the staff and volunteers of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson will be accepting and welcoming to any child or youth who has a disability or special needs – either physical, emotional, spiritual, social, or behavioral. Disabilities and special needs include but are not limited to:

- Mental Retardation
- Learning Disabilities
- Behavioral Disorders
- Speech and Language Disorders
- Sensory Impairment
- Physical Disabilities

It is the goal of this faith community to educate children and youth with disabilities in the least restrictive environment possible; though, depending on the degree of disability, the child or youth may require an alternative learning environment or the support of

volunteers in the religious education classroom. The RE Staff may consult with the Minister, parents, volunteer teachers, and the RE Council to develop an accommodation plan when needed to meet the individual needs of a child or youth.

The RE Council in cooperation with the RE Staff will further develop strategies for accommodating children and youth with special needs. These strategies may be revised on an annual basis, and may include but not be limited to the following:

- Teacher Training
- Family Outreach
- Policy Revision
- Addressing Architectural Barriers (in cooperation with the Buildings and Grounds Committee)

IV. Parent Involvement

A. Children's Behavior and Discipline

1. The registered parents/guardians must be present on the church grounds with the children. A note designating an adult as being the temporarily responsible party may be presented to RE Staff, if different from those listed on the registration form. An older sibling (who is at least 12 years old) may sign a child out of class or the playground.
2. RE classes end (usually) at the same time as the worship service. At this time, children who are in 3rd grade and up may join the adults for Coffee Hour under the supervision of designated adults. Children are expected to behave in a safe manner around all members of the congregation. Any member of the congregation may stop a child and politely and respectfully request that he/she follow the rules of the church campus.
3. Proper behavior and safe conduct are encouraged at all times. Adults are encouraged to respectfully remind children of the following rules (which are stated positively) as needed.
 - a. Because our church is a safe place for people to come, I will walk indoors and run only in approved areas at approved times.
 - b. I will treat others fairly by sharing, including sharing food during snacks or Coffee Hour.
 - c. I will care for our planet by cleaning up after myself.
 - d. Because others are just as important as I am, I will be polite and speak nicely to them.
4. Children/ Youth are expected to be respectful toward people and property at all times. Youth are expected to behave responsibly and courteously, and follow the same covenant rules that they follow in their classes. Loud play will not be tolerated outside the playground. Youth are not allowed to be in the parking lot at any time except to retrieve something from their car, *if* that is generally allowed by the youth's parent(s).
5. Unsafe behavior is NOT allowed: Rough-housing, rough play, wrestling, fighting, and foul/threatening/abusive language are not permitted on church property. Running, roller blading/skating, scooter riding, and skate boarding are permitted only when there is an organized activity AND when an adult in charge has given permission.
6. Parents have an important role in keeping their children safe at church. All children 2nd grade and younger must be directly supervised by a designated adult at all times. Parents must drop them off at supervised play or class time, and then pick them up from class or the playground at designated times. UUCT children and youth in 3rd through 8th grades may be unsupervised in the following areas only: the playground, the courtyard, and Goddard Hall. Youth in 9th grade and older are responsible for monitoring their own behavior. Children and youth

are expected to participate during programming time. If any child or youth does not behave according to the guidelines set forth within these behavior policies, this privilege may be revoked.

7. At no time is physical punishment by anyone allowed on the church campus. Questions may be referred to the RE Staff. If a child or youth violates the privileges noted in paragraph 5, it is recommended that the adult who is made aware of the violation notify RE Staff or an RE Council member. On the first violation, youth will forego the privilege of unsupervised activity for the next two Sundays that they attend church. They will remain with their parent(s) during times of fellowship or be signed in and out of the playground by their parents during that time. On the second violation, it will be the same as above, but for the next four Sundays. On the third violation, the parent(s), youth, and RE Staff will meet to determine an appropriate consequence.
8. Parents, teachers and staff have an obligation to help children learn in a positive way what rules of behavior are expected of them when they are on the church campus, rather than disciplining them in a negative fashion. This should be done as part of class discussion in an age appropriate manner and as other opportunities arise.

B. Parents as Volunteers

1. Parents are expected to support the RE Program. A variety of volunteer opportunities are presented to the parents/guardians in the registration packet. Volunteer deferment is available on an as-needed basis, in consultation with RE Staff.
2. In addition, parents may be asked to occasionally assist in their child's class.

V. Classes

A. Class assignments

1. Children are assigned to classes by age for preschoolers and by school grade for older children.
 2. Grade divisions are defined by the RE Council.
 3. Exceptions can be made by the RE Staff, in consultation with the RE Council and/or teachers when necessary.
 4. Classes which have more than 10-15 children regularly attending will be reviewed by the RE Council and divided, if appropriate.
- B. The RE Program provides supplies and support for all classes.
- C. Classrooms will function as open spaces where the RE Staff and parents are welcome to observe the group.
- D. The RE Program begins with the start of the worship service. Children begin in the sanctuary and then are directed to their classrooms.
- E. Information pertinent to the program will be found in the weekly Order of Service, the newsletter, the RE Program Guide pamphlets, which are published at the beginning of the school year, and in mailings, emails and handouts to parents.

VI. Teaching

- A. Each class shall have at least 4 teachers who rotate as they arrange. Each week, class sessions should have two teachers, or a teacher and a parent volunteer.
1. Teachers are recruited by the RE Staff and the RE Council and are affirmed by the RE Council. Appeals may be made to the LFDD.
 2. Teaching positions are open to members and friends of the congregation who are at least 18 years of age, (except as noted in section II part F number 7) who have ideally been associated with the congregation for at least 3 to 6 months.

3. Teachers will fill out a sign up sheet or application and may be asked to provide references, be interviewed, or submit to a background check before or during their time as an RE volunteer.
 4. Teachers are on duty from approximately 15 minutes before class until 15 minutes after class or until students are picked up by parents, escorted to Coffee Hour, or escorted to the playground for supervised play.
- B. Teacher training workshops will be offered at the beginning of the school year and periodically during the year for teachers and all other interested parties to gain skills and understanding of this vitally important part of the RE Program. Additional training may be conducted online or via email.
1. Teachers will be asked to read and sign a Code of Ethics each academic year.
 2. Teacher trainings (in person or online) will cover the safety policies and practices of the congregation and the RE Program.
- C. The LFD program will use the selected curriculum, the LFD Program's Mission & Vision Statements and the UU Principles.

VII. Overnights and Off-Campus Field Trips by Children/Youth/Advisors

- A. **Prior to a field trip or overnight**
1. Plans for church-sponsored off-campus field trips or overnights must be reviewed and approved by the RE Staff at least one week (preferably two weeks) prior to the event. These field trips and overnights may be supervised by RE Staff or staff appointed designees.
 2. Permission slips for all participants under 18 years of age must be signed by parent/guardian and returned to the RE Staff prior to leaving on the trip or beginning the overnight. A copy of the permission slip will be given to drivers to have available during the trip.
 3. All drivers must have (on file in the RE office) a photocopy of their driver's license, proof of insurance and written permission from the owner of the vehicle (if they are not the owner) to drive the vehicle on the trip.
- B. **Overnights**
1. There must be two or more supervising adults on campus at all times.
 2. While youth are awake, there must be two or more supervising adults awake.
 3. While youth are sleeping, there must be one or more supervising adults awake at all times, with a second supervisory adult who can be awakened as needed.
 4. Youth may be asked to fill out a behavioral contract for the overnight.
- C. **Transportation Requirements**
1. Drivers must be 25 years of age or older.
 2. Vehicles used for transportation must have lap and shoulder belts for each rider and each rider must use lap and shoulder belts.
 3. Children will generally not be allowed to ride in the front seat of the vehicle. On rare occasions, youth ages 13 and older may be allowed to ride in the front seat. At no time are children ages 12 and younger allowed to ride in the front seat.
 4. Children under five years of age or weighing less than 40 pounds must be secured properly in a child passenger restraint system (safety seat).
- D. **Liability**
1. The vehicles used to transport children on church activities **MUST** be insured. The vehicle must be driven by the owner of said vehicle or by a person who has the owner's express written permission.
 2. The owner's insurance policy is primary; therefore, the church must have proof of insurance on the vehicle. The church's policy is secondary, only picking up when the primary insurance runs out or is inadequate. The church's insurance only covers bodily injury and medical coverage to the individuals riding in the car; it does not cover the vehicle.

VIII. Nursery Policies

A. General Policies

1.
 - One Service – The nursery will be open from ½ hour before service until 45 minutes after service, unless requested otherwise. All children must be picked up by 45 minutes after the end of service.
 - Two Services – The Nursery will be open from 15 minutes before the first service until 45 minutes after the second service.
2. The RE Coordinator shall set age appropriate guidelines for use of the nursery during services and all other church events.
3. All parents using the nursery will receive a copy of the nursery policies.
4. Nursery staff will wear name tags at all times so that they are easily identifiable.

B. Safety and Security Measures

1. Parents will be responsible for signing in and signing out their child at the nursery, as well as having current emergency information on file.
2. The RE Coordinator will be in contact with nursery staff at all times through use of a cell phone.
3. The outside doors to the children's bathrooms in Thoreau Building will be propped open when in use.
4. Safe Sitters must be able to focus on children in their care so should not have friends present while on duty.

C. Ratios

1. There will be a minimum of two trained people in the nursery when children are present. There will be at least one adult, and a Safe Sitter can be the 2nd and/or 3rd trained person.
2. There will be a strictly maintained ratio of one adult to six children (ages one to three) or one adult to four babies (ages zero to 12 months). The ratio in the nursery will be determined by the age of the youngest child present. For example: when a baby (0-12 months) is dropped off, an additional adult will be required when the fifth child arrives.
3. If the number of children in the nursery exceeds six (or four, if a baby is present) the RE Coordinator or other provider will be called to assist in the nursery until the ratio is within guidelines.

D. Staffing

1. A sign will be posted near the door to Barnum Room which lists the names and titles (i.e. Nursery Supervisor, Nursery Assistant, Parent Volunteer) of the people who are working in the nursery that day.
2. If the Nursery Supervisor is absent, the RE Coordinator will appoint a responsible adult to fill the supervisory position for the day.
3. The RE Coordinator, Nursery Supervisor, and the Nursery Assistant shall receive training in the following areas:
 - a. Infant/Child CPR and First Aid – including the use of gloves and how to safely handle blood and body fluids
 - b. Classroom management and discipline techniques and other childcare enrichment training as available.
4. Safe Sitters receive training under the nationally recognized and accredited Safe Sitter course. They also receive CPR training every two years.

IX. Childcare Policies

A. General Policies

1. The playground will be open for an hour following the primary service and for the time between two services or as advertised. During inclement weather, an

alternative space for supervised play will be provided. Responsibility for children returns to their parents at the publicized conclusion of class.

2. The playground will not be used if it is in need of repair.
3. All requests for childcare for special events will follow the church policy entitled "Childcare." Requests must be received one week prior to need. Cancellations must be made 48 hours in advance.
4. All rules and guidelines stated in the "Children's Behavior and Discipline" section of these Policies are applicable to childcare settings.

B. Ratios

1. There will be a minimum of two trained people supervising children at all times.
2. There will be a ratio of one adult to six children (ages one to three), one adult to fifteen children (ages four to six), or one adult to thirty children (ages seven and up). The ratio of Adult supervisor to child is determined by the age of the youngest child on the playground. For example: if preschool children (ages 3 & 4) are on the playground, the Adult supervisor may supervise not more than 6 children.
3. Teachers may take their preschool through 3rd grade students to the playground when the lesson is completed. Teachers must accompany their classes to the playground to ensure proper ratios of supervision. Curriculum teachers will be leaving the playground at the conclusion of RE programming, so prompt pick-up of children is necessary for safety.

X. Safety and Security Measures

A. General Policies

1. A First Aid Kit is available in the Nursery.
2. Small first aid kits are available in classroom supply boxes.
3. Visitors to RE on Sunday will be asked if their child has any food allergies or special needs. Visitors must fill out a visitor's card (available in the RE Office or the Order of Service), complete with children's information.
4. Parents of children not registered in our RE program attending UUCT events must fill out whatever forms are required under church policy #130 entitled "Childcare."
5. The RE Staff has developed rules for *Children's Safe Behavior for the Church Campus* which are as follows:
 - Wear shoes at all times! Closed toe shoes are recommended.
 - Unsupervised children should not be outside of safe designated areas. Children may not be in areas such as the parking lot or the area where the church dumpster is kept.
 - Children 2nd grade and younger must be supervised by a designated adult at all times. Parents must drop them off and pick them up from class or the playground at designated times.
 - Children 3rd – 7th grade may be unsupervised in these designated areas only: The playground, courtyard, and Goddard Hall. If children do not behave as expected, this privilege may be revoked.
 - Running is only permitted when there is an organized activity OR if children and youth have obtained permission from an adult in charge.
 - Big kids should not use toddler toys or equipment.
6. Please observe posted playground rules.
 - a. This list shall be posted at the playground when the playground is in use.
 - b. This list shall be made available for parents and any other interested parties.

- a. The RE Coordinator **or a designee** shall do a thorough check of the playground prior to use, **with the use of the *Playground and Campus Safety Checklist***.
 - b. The *Playground and Campus Safety Checklist* will be made available for parents and any other interested parties.
7. The RE Staff will maintain an up to date Evacuation Plan in case of fire or other emergency and will conduct annual RE Fire Drills.

XI. Before and After Class

- A. Before classes begin, children may be left in a supervised area. Otherwise, the parent/guardian is responsible for the children/youth until the scheduled start of class.
- B. Once the RE Program begins, the children/youth are expected to be in assigned classes or may remain with parents in the service.
- C. All children 2nd grade and younger must be directly supervised by a designated adult at all times. Therefore parents must pick them up from class, Coffee Hour or the playground at the conclusion of RE Programming.
- D. Older children are released at the end of class to meet their parent(s).

XII. Snacks

- A. **1st grade - YRUU**
 1. Children and Youth are welcome during Coffee Hour and other times of fellowship and may partake of the refreshments with the congregation.
 2. If children are unruly during times of fellowship, any adult member of the congregation may politely and respectfully remind children of the rules and are encouraged to report the behavior to the parent/guardian. Please see rules in Section IV, A.
 3. At times, there may be a snack during class time in order to celebrate a special occasion, or in order to help teach a theme.
 4. The registration form includes a section concerning dietary restrictions that teachers and the RE Staff should be aware of.

B. Spirit Play

1. Snack will be served during Spirit Play.
2. Parents should provide snacks, if needed, for their children with special dietary needs.
3. The registration form will be checked for dietary concerns.