

# Children's and Youth Religious Education 2007-2008



Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
of Grand Traverse

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## Religious Education

**R**eligious Education is central to our congregation's mission of "creating a better world by nurturing the heart and expanding the mind." UUCGT is a place of spiritual learning and social activism for people of all ages, especially children and youth.

Our RE program builds upon the religious education that our young people receive at home. Through lively lessons and activities, children and youth learn about themselves and their own spirits, about Unitarian Universalism and neighboring faiths. We also take part in community service.

In the words of William Ellery Channing, one of our extraordinary UU forebears, we strive "to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish spiritual life."

## Children's Chapel

**M**ost Sundays, the children attend the beginning of the worship service in the sanctuary, and then proceed to their Religious Education group. Once a month or so, the children come directly into the RE space, and we hold our own worship service all together, with the kids leading and participating in the service. Readings, songs, and activities are geared specially for them. This helps them to learn to value their own religious experiences and develop their own religious voices.

Youth Group attends the service and meets either afterward or on a weekday evening. They also lead worship for the entire congregation at least once a year.

## Intergenerational Worship and Pageant

**S**everal times a year, UUCGT holds intergenerational worship services, when the children are invited to remain in the sanctuary for the entire service, and participate actively. Once each year, the children and youth collaborate with adults in producing a special pageant!

## Social Action

Even very young children have a sense of compassion and a desire to help others. We nurture that equality in our children and youth by engaging in regular community service and social action projects, such as cooking for our congregation's lunch program for the hungry; collecting money and purchasing toys for children spending the holidays in shelters; and gathering mittens for children in need. Our older kids and the Youth Group choose their own projects.

## Social Activities

Sometimes we get together just for fun and fellowship outside of Sunday mornings, sharing activities like parties, campouts, sledding, movie nights, coffeehouses, potlucks, bowling, game nights, and more.

We offer a nursery for the littlest ones; RE experiences in four separate groups named for famous Unitarian and Universalist educators; and a High School Youth Group. Activities are led by trained volunteers from within the congregation, with support and guidance from the Director of Religious Education. We are flexible about placement; if you have any question about which group your child should join, please consult the DRE.

*The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own ...*  
- William Ellery Channing

## A Safe Congregation

In order to provide a safe environment for our children and youth, all volunteers who work with them fill out a confidential screening form. We emphasize the importance of physical and emotional safety, and we strive to have two adults working with each group of children.

## UUCGT RE Leadership

Karen McCarthy, DRE

Rev. Chip Roush

## The Bronson Alcott Group

(ages 6-9, grades 1-3)

*Spirit of Adventure: UU Identity* will be the first focus of this group. These lively activities help children understand what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist, and provide information about our principles and sources, and about famous UUs from history, as well as adventures for active, busy children (and quieter options for quieter kids). This group will also explore some "Holidays and Holy Days."

## The Sophia Lyon Fahs Group

(ages 10-12, grades 4-6)

This group will also examine *Spirit of Adventure: UU Identity*. Later in the year, we introduce children to World Religions, with fun explorations that expand our horizons, since (according to our Sources) "religious pluralism enriches and ennobles our faith."

## The John Murray Atwood Group

(ages 13-14, grades 7 & 8)

This is an important time for kids in our congregation. They begin the year with a social action project of their own choosing, guided by *In Our Hands*, a UUA peace and social justice program. They also explore racism and oppression, voting, and conflict management. They may choose to take part in a Coming of Age program, which concludes with a congregational celebration of this rite of passage.

Kids in this group are also invited to participate in Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education, led by specially trained facilitators.

## Youth Group

(ages 14-18, high school)

This age group has a rich history of influence in our faith: the Unitarian youth and the Universalist youth led the way to the merger of the two churches in 1961!



This year, our youth group meets three times a month on Sunday after the second service, and once a month on a weekday evening. They are involved in worship, leadership, social justice work, learning, and community building. With adult advisors, the group chooses their own work, worship, study, and play!

At the end of the school year we hold a special bridging ceremony for those who are graduating from high school.

*The great end in religious instruction ...  
is not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules,  
but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment.*

*- W. E. Channing*