



Universalist Unitarian Church of Peoria

*The church of the open mind,
the loving heart,
and the helping hands.*

**Children's Religious Education
2021-2022**

Community Means Strength

We are all longing to go home to some place
we have never been—a place half-remembered
and half-envisioned that
we can only catch glimpses of from time to time.
Community.

Somewhere, there are people to whom we can
speak with passion
without having the words catch in our throats.
Somewhere a circle of hands
will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we
enter,
voices will celebrate with us whenever we come
into our own power.

Community means strength
that joins our strength to do the work that needs to
be done.

Arms to hold us when we falter.

A circle of healing.

A circle of friends.

Someplace where we can be free.

By Starhawk

Welcome to our 2021-2022 Peoria UU Religious Education Program!

As Starhawk so beautifully expresses, community means strength. During our 2021-2022 UU Religious Education program, we will be focusing on community and the love that is within and among us. After so long apart, let us rebuilt our sense of community, among children, families, elders, and all in our own beloved community.

Our UU community is deeply committed to providing the emotional support, thoughtful guidance, and enriching opportunities that help children to feel loved, learn what matters most to them, and act courageously on their chosen beliefs. They will need these tools to help build beloved community in the future of this challenging and ever-evolving world. May we help them grow into that future...

In Hope and Connection~
Amy Popp

Our Religious Education Mission

To provide unique experiences to help our children view
the world in its broadest sense

To introduce and investigate
our UU heritage and principles

To explore the religions of the world

To stress and model the goal of ethical living

To inspire the search for truth and meaning
in every young mind

To provide the intellectual and emotional tools children
need to chart their own spiritual course

To provide a safe haven for our children
in which to share, question, wonder,
and feel good about themselves

Register On-line for our UU Children's RE Program

We encourage all families to register, or update their registrations each year if there have been any changes to address, phone number, email, etc. We need to keep our records updated to provide the best programming for all of our children and youth. Email re@peoriauuchurch.org to request fillable RE registration form. Just download the form when you receive it, complete it, save it under your Family name followed by the words RE Registration, and email it back to re@peoriauuchurch.org.

Printed forms are also available at the Welcome table in the church foyer.

Steps for a Healthy RE Program

- ~Children age 2 and under will remain with their caregivers. We have a quiet family area at the back right of the sanctuary. The service can also be viewed in our foyer, or listened to in our Fellowship Hall, which has a kids' corner.
- ~Ages 3-11 RE programming will be held outdoors through the month of October.
- ~Shared snacks will be avoided.
- ~In November, we will transition to indoor classes if the health risks from Covid-19 are acceptable at that time. If not, we will resume online Sunday lessons based on Sunday morning's story for preschool-6th grade students, and provide unstructured supervision on Sunday morning for those families who choose to attend.
- ~Masks will be worn indoors at all times, and we will use ventilated spaces, hand sanitizer, and social distancing whenever possible.
- ~Classrooms will be disinfected between class sessions.
- ~Volunteer teachers must provide proof of vaccination.*

Children's Religious Education: 2021-2022

Fall/Winter 2021

Preschool-K

Our preschool-kindergarten children will begin the year with simple games, crafts, and free play as they regain their sense of comfort in our UU space and enjoy time together. This freeform and welcoming environment is intended to enhance their feelings of safety and security within our UU community in particular, and amongst others in our world in general.

Grade 1-3

The *Love will Guide Us* curriculum, our 1st-3rd graders will learn to seek guidance in life through the lens of our Unitarian Universalist Sources, with an emphasis on love. Sessions apply wisdom from our Sources to help participants answer some important questions. Participants will learn that asking questions is valued in Unitarian Universalism, even as they begin to shape their own answers to life's big questions.

Grades 4-6

We will be offering the middle elementary portion of the UUA *Our Whole Lives* Sexuality program to our fourth-sixth graders. This program will help our 4th-5th graders to gain the knowledge, life principles, and skills they need to understand and express their sexuality in holistic, life-enhancing ways. A parent orientation will be held beforehand and participation in the program is voluntary.

Jr/Sr High School Youth Group

This year will begin with our junior and senior high youth becoming reacquainted and processing the past year as a youth community. When they are ready, they will begin to discuss the curriculum, *A Place of Wholeness*, which will help our youth explore what it means to be Unitarian Universalist. Our youth need practice in describing our multifaceted faith in terms that are personally meaningful and true. This curriculum also encourages youth to look inward for a clearer understanding of their personal faith and guides them to express that faith outward into the world.

Winter/Spring 2022:

Preschool

Our preschoolers will engage with the *Chalice Children* curriculum, exploring our Unitarian Universalist faith. It strives not just to teach about our faith, but also to provide experiences around the strength of community, the wonder and awe that transcend everyday understanding, and life issues we all share.

Grade K-2

Our second session of RE, we will be offering the youngest level of the UUA's *Our Whole Lives* Sexuality program to our kindergarten-second graders. This level

educates our children about babies, bodies, birth, and families. A parent orientation will be held beforehand and participation in the program is voluntary.

Our K-2 children will end the year with *The Love Surrounds Us* curriculum, which will help our children explore the 7 Principles in the context of Beloved Community of family/home, school, and neighborhood. Participants engage in activities that emphasize the love they feel in community.

Grade 3-6

The *Toolbox of Faith* curriculum invites participants to reflect on qualities of our UU faith, such as integrity, courage and love, as tools they can use in living their lives and building their own faith. What tools does UU-ism offer for the challenges of life? Children discover what aspects of UU faith are helpful to them, developing a toolbox of faith.

Junior/Senior High Youth Group

Our senior high youth will continue on with our *A Place of Wholeness* curriculum exploring more in-depth how to talk about what it means to be Unitarian Universalist. Our youth will continue practicing how to describe our multifaceted faith in terms that are personally meaningful and true to them. Youth will look deeper inward for a clearer understanding of their personal faith and guides them to express that faith outward into the world.

Fall/Winter Special Events:

- Fruit and Chocolate Communion
- Halloween Trunk or Treat
- Thanksgiving Cornucopia Canned Food Drive
- Deck the Halls
- UU Holiday Service

Parent/Guardian Involvement:

We expect that parents and caregivers, trusting in us to share their concern for their children's moral and spiritual well-being, will support and assist our efforts in the following ways:

- ~being committed to your child's regular participation, according to your family situation;*
- ~informing yourself about the activities of the RE program and talking about them with your child at home;*
- ~sharing your time and skills with the RE Program.*

The Peoria UU RE Families Facebook Group:

Search for "*Peoria Universalist Unitarian RE Families Group*" on Facebook to get tuned in. Request to join, and we will add you to our group. Once you join, you will begin to receive information about our on-line RE programming, helpful tips and parenting articles, weekly activities, and information about RE events for this year.

Questions:

If you have questions at all, or need any additional information, please don't hesitate to contact the RE director at 688-5608.

We need lots of help to ensure the quality and growth of our program. Your support and involvement in this important program are much appreciated!

Children's Religious Education Committee

The members of our UU Religious Education Committee work closely with the DRE and are responsible for the educational philosophy, curriculum selection, and implementation of the RE program and special events for those of nursery through high school age.

Feel free to call one of the people listed below with ideas, questions, or concerns. Your input and participation are important to us.

Sarah Short, Chairperson - - - - - 643-0049
Amy Popp, CRE - - - - - 688-5608
Jennifer Innis, Minister - - - - - 688-5608

Our UU Children's Covenant ***For Children and Their Caregivers***

Keep healthy in mind and body
Treat other's bodies and belongings with respect
Be polite and helpful
Play and work together with everyone nicely
Respect everyone
Be kind and accepting
Be open-minded
Listen quietly and carefully to others
Forgive when your heart is able
Offer caring and help when others are sad
Live peacefully
Stand up for others
Cooperate with others in order to make life better
Treat others as you want to be treated
Have fun together!