

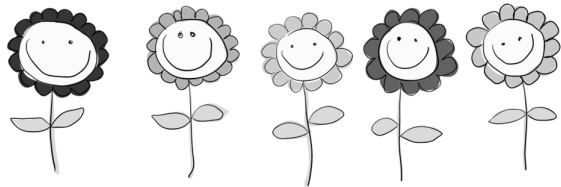
## **RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION COMMITTEE**

The RE Committee plays a vital role in child and youth ministry. The responsibilities include volunteer support, decisions regarding program curriculum, establishing program goals, policies and procedures, and promoting multigenerational activities.

The Religious Exploration Committee meets once a month. All are welcome! Please check our website for the most up to date information: [www.vistauu.org](http://www.vistauu.org)

### **2011-2012 RE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Kathleen Moscato  
Marianne Gifford  
Per Corbeil  
Karen Gee



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## **Palomar Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Religious Exploration**



*Living Our Covenant*

**Handbook  
2011/2012**



*All that quickens sympathetic imagining, that awakens sensitivity to others' feelings;*

*All that enriches and enlarges understanding of the world;*

*All that strengthens courage, that adds to the love of living;*

*All that leads to developing skills needed for democratic participation;*

*All these put together are the curriculum through which children learn.*

~ Sophia Lyon Fahs



Exploring different ideas of God helps us as we try to decide for ourselves what we believe about God.



Concepts of God change historically in our culture through the centuries, and they will change for each of us over our lifetime.




## **M**MULTIGENERATIONAL WORSHIP DATES:


October 2, 2011	Blessing of the Animals
December 11, 2011	Holiday Music Service
December 24, 2011	Christmas Eve Service
December 25, 2011	Christmas Day Sunday Service
April 8, 2012	Easter/Passover
April 22, 2012	Earth Day
May 20, 2012	Bridging and Milestones
June 17, 2012	Flower Communion


## **I**DEAS ABOUT GOD


Most parents wonder how the concept of God is treated in our classes on Sundays. Below are ideas about how we examine the concept of God from the UU curriculum *Timeless Themes*. These “handholds” are useful for both children and adults when exploring different ideas about God.


 Ideas about God are often complicated and difficult to understand

 Ideas about God always have something about them that is a mystery

 Ideas about God have characteristics that we humans perceive as both good and bad, because both good and bad things happen in our lives.

 Our ideas of God reflect the time and place in which we live. Those who raise sheep for a living will see their God as a shepherd; those who live in a culture where men are in charge will see God as a male; those who live in a culture which uses punishment and war to solve problems will have a God who is punishing and warlike.

 Despite the fact that many people live amid poverty, oppression, and violence, they can envision a better world and a better way to live - a way of love, justice and peace; and their God reflects these qualities.

 As Unitarian Universalists, we can make up our own minds about what to think about God. We may also believe that there is no God, if our minds and hearts lead us in that direction.

## **Ways to Help Your Child Get the Most out of our Program**

**Attend regularly** - Although children can form friendships and connections quickly, regular attendance can contribute to their sense of belonging to a faith community and increase their sense of comfort.

**Volunteer in the classroom** - Leading or helping in a class demonstrates to your child that you value RE.

**Learn about the curriculum** - and make connections to the themes and topics at home everyday.

**Attend fellowship events together** - Sometimes it’s difficult to build friendships in the 40 to 60 minutes children and youth spend in class. Attending fellowship events can offer children the opportunity to spend more time together.

**Come to class** - Sometimes, children feel anxious when attending a new church or progressing to a new RE age group. Your presence in the classroom can be a reassuring way to help with your children’s concerns. You are always welcome, whether helping in the classroom or simply being present for your child.

**Share your own interest in the Fellowship** - Attending the Fellowship on Sundays is a family event. All family members telling each other about what they learned or are excited about reinforces this shared family experience.

## MISSION STATEMENT AND VISION

The vision of the Palomar Unitarian Universalist Fellowship's Religious Exploration Committee is that children and youth ages 0-18 will:

- † Develop a UU Identity;
- † Become knowledgeable and aware of UU heritage, history and principles;
- † Develop a dedication to service;
- † Establish personal core values;
- † Establish spiritual and religious traditions; and
- † Acquire the necessary tools to embark on a lifelong spiritual path.

## CLASS SCHEDULE



Children begin each Sunday in fellowship with the congregation. After the story for all ages, they go to their age-appropriate classrooms. We offer children's religious exploration at both services as follows:

### 1st Service – 9:30 am

Nursery (ages to 3 years old)

Primary Class (ages 4 through 6, grades pre-school through 1st grade) meets in the Reeve Room

Intermediate Class (grades 2-5)

*\*At this time, children aged 8 (3rd grade) and under meet with the Primary Class and children aged 9 (4th grade) and older meet with the Tweens class. When the Intermediate age level attendance increases in numbers a separate class will be formed.*

Tweens (grades 6-8) meets in the Alcott Room

## MILESTONES

Each year in May, we celebrate the milestones of our children and youth in a Sunday service. We recognize those children and youth who are moving from one age group up to the next. Our congregation honors each child and youth who are celebrating a milestone with a book or gift.

The milestones are:

- Moving from the Nursery to the Primary Class— those children who will be 4 by the fall of 2012.
- Moving from the Primary to Intermediate Class - those children who will be in 2nd grade in the fall of 2012.
- Moving from the Intermediate Class to the Tweens Class - those children who will be in 6th grade in the fall of 2012.

## BRIDGING

One of the most important things we can do for our youth is to support them into adulthood, to keep them connected to Unitarian Universalism, and continue to minister to them as they become adults. We recognize this time of transition for our high school seniors with activities and a Bridging Ceremony.

In a Bridging Ceremony, the congregation holds out its hand, welcoming the bridger into the larger church community. Bridging is not just an end to a wonderful and invaluable youth program; it is also the beginning of a new and exciting time as a Unitarian Universalist adult.

## FRIDAYS UNPLUGGED

Inspired by our Conscious Family Film Series, the RE Committee is glad to host an event that has us unplugging from our techie, overscheduled lives. This is an outdoor event when it's warm and an indoor event when it's cold where we get together face to face. We share a potluck dinner, play games, and ditch the TV and computer for awhile. Fridays Unplugged takes place on the fourth Friday of the month at 5 pm. Acoustic bands, board games, card games and good old fashioned conversation are welcome!

## OUR WHOLE LIVES (OWL)

Our Whole Lives is a series of sexuality education curricula for five age groups: grades K-1, grades 4-6, grades 7-9, grades 10-12, and adults.

Our Whole Lives helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. It equips participants with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, Our Whole Lives provides not only facts about anatomy and human development, but helps participants to clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.

In our congregation, we are working to be able to provide OWL classes for early elementary through high school aged children and youth. Please contact DRE, Lisa Wellens, with your questions and be on the lookout for information in your RE eNews for important updates about OWL.



## COMING OF AGE

Coming of Age is a program that marks the transition from childhood to young adult for youth in 8th and 9th grade. Many UU congregations mark this transition with a 6 month to a year-long coming of age programs, which generally include four parts: pairing youth with adult mentors; discussions and retreats that emphasize self-awareness and confidence-building; service to the church and community; and a culminating affirmation ceremony. The next program will run during the 2012/2013 school year.

## 2nd Service – 11:00 am

Nursery (ages to 6 years old)

YRUU (grades 9-12) meets in the library.

Classes are approximately 50 to 60 minutes long and usually end 10 to 15 minutes after the service is over. **Children in the Nursery should be picked up directly after the service is over.**

## CLASS INFORMATION

### Age/Grade Policy

Generally, children and youth are placed in classes according to their grade in school. Parents of homeschooled children may discuss placement of their children with the Director of Religious Exploration.

### Starting/Ending Times

Children and youth begin in the sanctuary with their families along with the rest of our congregation. There is usually a children's recessional following a Story for All Ages, after which the congregation will sing a recessional hymn while the children and youth are walked to their classes. First and Second Sessions may end 10 to 15 minutes after the service ends, or earlier. Nursery ends when the service ends.

### Picking up Children

Tweens and YRUU are dismissed from class when the class is over. Children in the Intermediate class may be dismissed without parent/guardian having to pick them up as long as there is written permission from a parent or guardian. Children in the Nursery/Preschool through Primary class must have a parent or other agreed-upon responsible party pick them up from the classroom when class is over.

### No Playground Supervision

Please note that there is no supervision of children on the fellowship grounds or the playgrounds before or after the service. Please supervise your children at these times.



## WHAT ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT?

**Nursery/Preschool (Infants through 3 years).** For infants and children to three years old, this program begins with a candle-lighting circle time followed by free play and craft time. The children play outdoors in the pre-school play yard, supervised by adults, then have snacks while listening to a story in the classroom. The class is taught by Bob Kintz and Jasmine Maldonado.



### **PILLARS - Primary Class through Tweens**

Since most of our class levels span three ages, it is important to be sure that any child, of any age be exposed to four areas of our program. These areas are: UU Heritage and Identity, World Religions, Our Judeo-Christian Heritage, and Social and Environmental Justice. These areas of exploration are on a three year rotation so that every child who attends will be able to learn at their current class level without any gaps. Last year we explored UU Heritage and Identity.

This year, we will explore these areas using the “pillars” model. These pillars are:

*Judeo-Christian Heritage*

*World Religions*

*Social and Environmental Justice; and*

*Community Building*

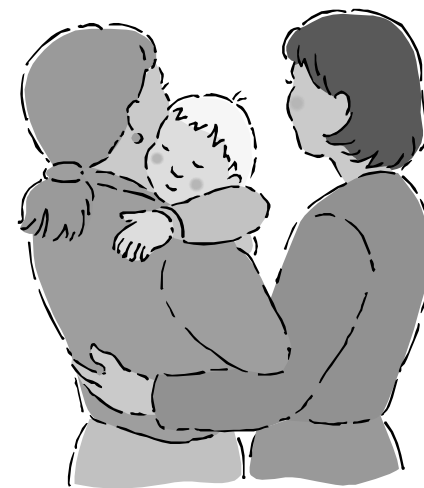
Each Sunday we will explore a different pillar. On 5th Sundays, we will spend time together outside learning about our natural environment on our beautiful campus. Every Sunday will tie in how these pillars inform us as Unitarian Universalists. We will always explore what it means to be UU.



**YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists - Grades 9-12 (Ages 14-18).** This active high school age group meets every Sunday in the library during the service for worship, discussion and social action. Youth Advisor: Eileen Maurer . Meets in the Library during the 11 am service.

## EXPECTATION OF PARENTAL COMMITMENT

People power is crucial to the well-being of our program. Though funding is important, it is people who keep things running on Sundays. The RE Committee recognizes this and asks that families who are pledging members volunteer 10 times during the year in our program and non-pledging families volunteer 20 times. Volunteer time would need to be completed between September 2011 and June 2012. We have put together a list of opportunities and will make these available at the RE Orientation or you may contact Lisa Wellens: [dre@vistauu.org](mailto:dre@vistauu.org) for an email copy. If you are new to the fellowship – attended less than a year – this does not apply to you, though we welcome your willingness to help out sooner.



I believe that by providing my children a consistent and committed Unitarian Universalist religious education, I am giving them a chance to be less lost, less longing and more directed in their own search for their true paths and meaningful contributions in this life.

I believe this ongoing religious education will save them much time and angst searching for the right answers – because here, as growing UUs, they will be trained instead to ask the right questions, to listen, to engage and to connect, and they will go forth with confidence in their shared knowledge, language and purpose as UUs.

Growing up without Hebrew school (or Sunday school), I thought it might have been hard, in my 30's, to suddenly start having to show up somewhere every weekend. Well, on the contrary, it is the easiest, most natural thing in the world. I know now: my children, and I, receive so much enlightenment, encouragement and connectedness from coming here every Sunday, all year round, learning with this religious community. Some part of me knew that when I was 8 years old, watching my religiously-educated peers.

Thankfully, my kids will know the connection of religious education, from birth on up -- from the other side of the fence.

*Megan is a freelance writer and editor who attends Palomar Fellowship with her family.*



## WHAT WOULD A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST DO?

*Or WWUUD?*

What would we do? What are some of our spiritual practices? Each month, we will become familiar with a different UU spiritual practice. These are:

**September** - Atonement, or admission of one's mistakes and a desire to do better

**October** - Stewardship

**November** - Simplicity

**December** - Worship

**January** - Self Care

**February** - Gratitude

**March** - Service

**April** - Forgiveness

**May** - Prayer, Meditation, and Reflection

## RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION POLICIES

### Yearly Registration Required

Parents of regularly attending children and youth (more than three visits in the Religious Exploration Program) MUST complete a blue RE Registration form at the beginning of each Religious Exploration year.

### Volunteer Guidelines

Volunteers must have regularly attended our fellowship for six months before they can volunteer in the RE program. All classroom volunteers must review and sign two forms: the *PUUF Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Youth* and the *Voluntary Disclosure Form*.

### Number of Class Volunteers

There shall be two adults per class - not from the same family - and be scheduled two weeks prior to volunteer date or the class will be closed. Children and youth in the program must be either in class or with a parent or responsible party during the service.

## **R**ELIGIOUS EXPLORATION POLICIES (CONT.)

### **Child In Class or With Parent**

Children and youth in the program must be either in class or with a parent or responsible party during the service.

### **Disruptive Behavior and Procedures**

If a child's behavior is disrupting the class and every attempt has been made to involve and/or distract the child, *and* she/he continues to be disruptive, the DRE or classroom helper will summon the parents/guardians to remove their child from class. *Class leaders will not employ corporal punishment in our classrooms at any time.*

### **Field Trip and Transportation Policies**

All drivers must be at least 25 years of age and must provide proof of insurance.

There must be enough seat belts for everyone and everyone must wear a seat belt.

Written permission of the parent/guardian of all minor passengers will be obtained prior to be transported. This permission will include all relevant details pertaining to the event, such as date and location, name of driver(s), time of departure, and time of return.

No driver may consume alcohol or use any form of drug which can affect physical or mental performance during or before carrying out her/his duty as a driver.

A minimum of two adults must accompany a group going off-site.

Exceptions for exigent circumstances only may be made by the primary on-site adult leader.

A copy of the driver's license and proof of insurance for the driver will be kept on file and updated as needed.



It also can't happen without being reinforced at home. UU, family counselor and college professor William Doherty says, "Religion is caught more than it is taught. And it's caught most in the family. Church programs can supplement but not replace what goes on in the home."

Doherty notices that we as UUs often shy away from providing religious education to our kids, at home and at church, for fear of somehow indoctrinating or imposing beliefs, which may seem counter to the open-mindedness and often authority-averse liberal religious viewpoint and UU Principles. Yet, he argues, "we have to get over our ambivalence" if we want to offer our children a deep and full engagement in living Unitarian Universalism.

The goal of UU religious education for our children is two-fold, he says: the first goal is "that [children] grow up spiritually alive, free, and engaged with the world," and the second goal is "that they grow up as citizens in our living religious tradition." To do this, Doherty asserts, children need to know their parents take religious education and their UU faith seriously, and entire families must be grounded in a wider, intentional, unembarrassed UU tradition.

"It's a fantasy, this idea of getting out of our children's way," Doherty says. "That we will release them to find their own path, it's a fantasy. ... The reality is that if we get out of their way, we hand our children over to the gravitational pull of a me-first culture." This, he says, includes chronic busyness, consumerist, competitive values, and civic disengagement, as well as more authoritarian religious traditions. He adds: "We have to offer them citizenship papers in our Unitarian Universalist religion."

In my case, while I may have avoided jumping into any authoritarian religions, being left to just "find my own way" – by my well-meaning, liberal parents who did not want to impose religion on me -- I know I that I did fall right into the confusing fray of our competitive consumer culture, especially coming of age in the 80's. And it has taken me years to dig out of that suffocating mindset and truly start on my own path of speaking out against those destructive values through my writing, teaching and life choices.

# *Tending the Flame*

*In May 2011, we asked some of our parents to speak during the Bridging/ Milestone Service about why this faith community and RE program are important to them. Below are the words spoken by Megan Pincus Kajitani.*

I remember being 8 years old and looking with envy at my friends who all went to Hebrew school together. My parents were raised with organized religion -- my dad Jewish and my mom Catholic – and had both... decided against it.

So, my brother and I were raised with lots of holidays but no regular synagogue or church attendance, and no real sense of religious identity, but for being half-this and half-that, and nothing really. And I remember thinking longingly that those friends who went to Hebrew school together each week shared this sense of belonging, of shared knowledge, context and connection that I could not really imagine. I was on the other side of a tall fence from them – they together, and I (I felt) alone.

Perhaps, then, it may seem surprising that I never really got involved in organized religion in any long-term sense until I joined this Fellowship five years ago, in my mid-30's. For me, though, because it was five years ago that I had my first child, it makes perfect sense. Growing up, I did not have religious education or religious community, and I can't change that past, but I knew that I could change the future by offering religious education and community to my own children. So here we are.

Our RE program offers my kids so much that I hope for them in terms of information, discovery, self-exploration, creativity and spiritual community – and a chance to grow up with that sense of belonging, context and knowledge about things religious and spiritual that I so envied in my Hebrew school-going friends.

This can only happen, of course, when we commit to bringing them to their RE classes regularly. Community, identity and layered knowledge can't be built on a drop-in basis.

## **Signing In and Signing Out of Children from Class – Ages from infant through 6 years**

Parents and Guardians of Nursery age-level and Primary age-level children must sign their children into and out of class. Parents and Guardians are strongly encouraged to give their cell phone/pager # on the sign in sheet and leave their phone in silent mode during the service. This ensures that you may be reached in case of emergency or any other reason you may need to come to the classroom.

## **Use of Nametags in the Classroom**

Primary through Tweens (middle school) age-level groups shall wear nametags in class. This ensures that teachers, staff and other volunteers can identify children for general purposes and in case of emergency situations.

## **Adult/Child Ratios for Different Age Level Classes**

There will be a minimum of two adults scheduled to supervise groups. For purposes of these requirements a “group” is defined as those minors who have been assigned to a nursery, preschool, or individual class or specific program or activity within the context of that class, as well as youth who are taking part in a planned organized component of their program.

Minimum caregiver/staff ratio is as follows:

Nursery – 3 months to 3 years: 1:4

Primary – 4 years to 6 years: 1:6

Intermediate – 7 years to 10 years: 1:6

Tweens (middle school youth) – 11 years to 13 years: 1:8

High School youth – 14 years to 18 years: 1:10

If the numbers exceed the above stated ratios, an additional adult will be added to the class.

## **Diapering and Assistance in the Bathroom**

RE Volunteers, Staff and Caregivers are not allowed to:

- Change diapers of infants and children.
- Assist children of any age in the bathroom unless there is an emergency and the child needs immediate assistance.

Children in the Intermediate age-level class may be released to use the bathroom and the class helper may accompany child to the bathroom, but must remain outside the bathroom in the hallway unless there is an emergency and the child needs immediate assistance.

# GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN

## BASED ON OUR SEVEN UU PRINCIPLES

shared by and adapted from First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, Texas



**We believe that each and every person is important.**

- ✦ Safety is our first concern!
- ✦ Children in Nursery through Intermediate classes must remain in classrooms or supervised areas until picked up by parents.

- ✦ Only gentle play is appropriate on fellowship grounds.
- ✦ Treat everyone with respect. Use caring language and behavior.

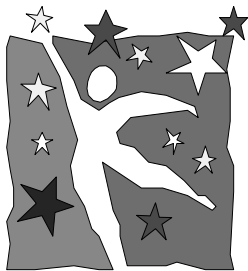
**We believe that all people should be treated fairly and kindly.**

- ✦ Listen and follow directions.
- ✦ Be polite. Take turns.
- ✦ Care about one another.



**We believe that we should accept one another and keep on learning together.**

- ✦ Make a commitment to regular attendance. Your friends and class leaders depend upon you.
- ✦ Include everyone in class activities and planning.
- ✦ Friends are welcome in class. Let them know our rules.
- ✦ Participate with enthusiasm.

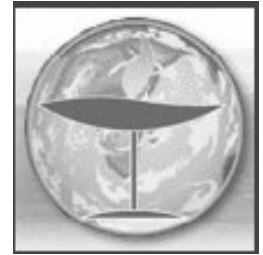


**We believe that each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life.**

- ✦ Share your ideas and respect the ideas of others.

**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.



**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.
- ✦ Participate in fellowship social action projects.



**We believe in caring for our planet earth, the home we share with all living things.**

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

- ✦ Do not climb small trees or walk on newly planted areas.

