

Birmingham Unitarian Church

2008-2009 Church School Curriculum

Preschool and Early Elementary

Our **Preschool** program weaves together topics selected from Unitarian Universalist curricula for young children. There is an emphasis on exploring our UU faith, nurturing our children's emotional and moral development and finally, engaging them in the challenges and wonders of the world in which we live.

For our **Kindergarten through 5th grade youngsters**, the Birmingham Unitarian Church has implemented a new format for its children's religious education program, known as the Workshop Rotation Model. This new program is based on Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory and it was developed in response to congregational input from a 2006 member survey. This program focuses on our UU Principles and Purposes as well as expanding on topics and curricula already developed by the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Briefly, each church year has an overall theme - this year's theme was "Leadership & Responsibility". Each church year is also divided up into five smaller topics, or "rotations". This year's rotations are:

- Spiritual Leaders (Sept/Oct)
- Moral Teachings (Nov/Dec)
- Influential Unitarian Universalists (Jan/ Feb)
- Family & Community Responsibilities (March/April)
- Civic Duty (May/June)

BUC's kids participate in four different workshops that develop each five week theme, or "rotation". They learn by doing. Workshops are developed with the aim of leading the children to think and learn through experience and discussion. Possible workshops might be drama, cooking, storytelling, games, science, art, gardening, video and more.

At the end of each "rotation" or theme, (after the four different workshops) a minister leads all the children in a worship service focusing on that theme. This reinforces the rotation's lessons as well as allows the kids to enjoy a worship service which is geared for their developmental level.

Finally, the Director of Children's Education also teaches several multi-age classes on different Sunday mornings throughout the church year. These classes focus on smaller topics which are directly related to the rotation theme that is taking place at that time.

Middle and High School

6th/7th graders participate in a two year adapted version of the *Neighboring Faiths* curriculum. The youth are introduced to religious traditions, beliefs and practices of people throughout the world. Guest speakers visit from a variety of faith communities to share their

experiences and the classes take field trips to other churches, mosques, temples and places of worship throughout the area.

6th & 7th Grades also participate in the **UFO (Unitarian Friendship Organization)**, an introductory youth group for middle schoolers. UFO focuses on community building, social action and leadership development with students participating in social outreach projects, district-wide retreats and just plain fun activities like bowling, sledding and the annual progressive dinner.

8th Grade is a coming-of-age year. Youth begin the year, September – December, with the **OWL (Our Whole Lives)** curriculum studying human sexuality and relationships. OWL is a comprehensive human sexuality curriculum which emphasizes positive relationships, communication, safety and accurate information *all* people should have in order to make informed decisions about sexual and relationship issues.

In January 8th Graders begin the **ROPE (Rite of Passage Experience)** program. The ROPE program teaches and encourages youth examine their own personal faith journeys as Unitarian Universalists. At the end of the ROPE year the youth travel to Boston to explore their UU roots, then return to present a worship service, ROPE Sunday, during which they share personal credo statements with the congregation. The ROPE year also includes opportunities for youth to participate in social action projects and get together for fun and games.

The **High School** classes work on a rotation model complementing and rounding out the BUC Children's & Youth curricular program. Themes guiding the four years are: "Radically Inclusive" (2008-2009); "Spiritually Alive"; "Truth, Ethics and Responsibility"; and "Justice-Centered". These thematic ideas bridge six focus areas in High School curricular learning. For 2008-2009 the focus areas are: Diversity in Leadership, Equity, Sexuality, Christian Bible & Sacred Texts, Prayers and Worship, and Ways of Knowing.

The High School Sunday Morning curricular program is a synthesis of youth input as well as UUA, secular diversity and Bible Study curricula adapted for use in our classes. Youth have an engaging and inspiring Sunday morning experience; exploring in more detail issues affecting religious practice, living an ethical and enriched life, sources and sharing of knowledge and beliefs, UU identity and concerns affecting youth's lives. The High School class meets every Sunday morning during 2nd Service.

The **High School** youth also participate in **GUUSH (the Great Unitarian Universalist Senior High youth group)**. GUUSH meets every Sunday evening, 6:30p – 8:00p. Each of the 4 weeks in a month focuses on a different aspect of Youth programming: Worship, Social Justice, Leadership Development, and Community Building. High School youth also have opportunities to participate in district-wide youth activities conferences and trainings.

