

First Unitarian of Albuquerque
R.E. Council Resource Manual

March 2016



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Introduction

First Unitarian's Religious Education (RE) Program provides opportunities for spiritual, philosophical, ethical and faith development for children and youth. The R.E. Council is responsible for organizing, promoting, and supervising the religious education program for the children and youth. These responsibilities include:

- a. Establish RE policies and procedures.
- b. An age appropriate curriculum is taught year round.
- c. Develop new programs.
- d. Arrange events for children and youth.

The RE Staff collaborates with the RE Council in providing the RE Program. The RE collaborates with the RE Staff concerning issues of policy and direction of the Program and operates as a working group providing lay leadership to the Church's RE programs.

The Council consists of 9 to 11 Church members leadership of the RE program. The Board appoints the Chair. The Council is structured so that each member has a portfolio of responsibilities. Portfolio holders can recruit other congregants to help them. The structure includes: President, Secretary, Curriculum Team Lead, Community Connections Lead, RE Buildings & Grounds Liaison, Program Evaluation Lead, Recruitment Coordinator, and UU Kids Camp Liaison. The Director of Religious Education and the Minister who holds the RE portfolio are ex-officio members.

Council members serve for two-year terms corresponding to the RE program year (August) with a staggered rotation. After serving two 2-year terms, a Council member may not be reappointed until after one year off of the Council.

The RE Council has agreed to meet on the third Sunday of the month in the RE Building beginning at 12:15 PM with lunch, meeting is to start at 12:30 PM and end by 2:00 PM. Monthly portfolio reports are to be submit to the Council Chair seven days prior to the meeting. The meeting agenda, minutes, related materials are sent at least 5 days in advance of the meeting. The 2016 meeting schedule follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| ○ January 3, 2016 | ○ July 17 th |
| ○ February 21 st | ○ August 21 st |
| ○ March 20 th | ○ September 18 th |
| ○ April 17 th | ○ October 16 th |
| ○ May 15 th | ○ November 20 th |
| ○ June 19 th | ○ December 18 th |

Communication

Information about RE programs and activities can be found at the Church's website at <http://uuabq.com/religious-education/re-children-and-youth/> as well as through the Church's weekly e-broadsheet, the Messenger and the RE's 3 Facebook pages.

Current Council Members

| Name | Portfolio | Email |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Council Members | | |
| Geri Knoebel 2015-2017 | Chair | gknoebel@unm.edu |
| Benita Terrell 2015 - 2017 | Secretary Program Evaluation | Benita.terrell@earthlink.net |
| Carol Cowan 2015 - 2017 | Curriculum Team Lead | carolcowanwdc@yahoo.com |
| Nicia Rae 2015 - 2017 | UU Kids Camp Liaison | Kapseesh34@yahoo.com |
| Desiree Spielman 2015 - 2017 | Community Connections Lead | dmspiel@gmail.com |
| Stirling Crow | Recruitment Coordinator | stirlingcrow@yahoo.com |
| Vacant | Buildings & Grounds Liaison | |
| Ex-Officio Members | | |
| Staff | | |
| Mia Noren | Director of Religious Education | dre@uuabq.org |
| Ministers | | |
| Angela Herrera | Minister | aherrera@uuabq.org |
| James Galasinski | Ministerial Resident Youth Coordinator | jamesg@uuabq.org |

2015 -2019 Strategic Plan RE Vision

First Unitarian will build an RE program that is loved by our children and youth, highly valued by parents, and well supported by the congregation. Since this is a time of change for RE programs in all churches, we want to lead innovations in this area.

RE Council Portfolios

Council Positions

President

Convenes group and facilitates meetings for maximum effectiveness and team spirit. Works closely with DRE to form agenda, and carries agenda items forward as needed throughout the year. Stays in touch with Council members about their portfolios. Sends written reports out along with agenda at least three days before meeting. Works with the DRE to lead an annual RE Council conversation on visioning and long range planning, incorporating the results of the program evaluation. Prepares RE Council Annual Report.

Secretary

Writes minutes, documenting decisions of the council. Highlights action items with name of person accountable, and sends minutes out within 3 days of the meeting at which the minutes were taken.

Program Positions

Buildings & Grounds Liaison

Serves as liaison to the Board's Buildings and Grounds Committee, communicating RE facility and grounds needs. Works with RE staff and Council's Recruitment Coordinator to engage volunteers for projects as needed. Participates as lead on a team managing major improvements to RE Buildings and Grounds.

Community Connections Lead

Works with a subgroup of Special Events volunteers to plan and coordinate special events at which the main focus is community building. Events may include: Teacher luncheons, RE Parent lunches, Family Barbeques, Halloween Party, Easter Egg Hunt. Works with the DRE to incorporate volunteer appreciation and fundraising opportunities as needed.

Curriculum Team Lead

Understands RE's overall curriculum map, and leads a small team as needed to ensure classes are aligned with the map. Works with DRE to implement minor changes in map (e.g. swapping topics between classes). DRE and Curriculum Team lead propose major curriculum mapping changes (e.g. elimination of a subject area, or creation of a new one) to RE Council, which votes on them. Is a resource for teacher teams tasked with forming classes from the UUA curriculum, in summer and as needed. Helps RE move toward a model in which there is room for teacher creativity, but there is less variation year to year in curriculum, making the process more routine.

Program Evaluation

Consulting with DRE and minister, the Program Evaluation Team plans and conduct a yearly RE program evaluation in which child, parent, and volunteer feedback is collected. The Program Evaluation Team then prepares a report, which the RE Council, DRE, and Minister apply to build on strengths and troubleshoot weaknesses in the RE program. Program evaluation includes RE Classes, Children's Chapel, Special Events, and intergenerational worship.

Recruitment Coordinator

Works with the DRE, RE Staff, and RE Council improve the culture of RE volunteer recruitment from something we are always begging for to a requirement for families participating in RE. In doing so, the work will include experimenting with how to do it better and make it easier and more fun for people to volunteer.

UU Kids Camp Liaison

Involved in the camp planning process, and serves as a liaison between the RE Council and the Camp Planning Team.

Minister

The Rev. Angela Herrera, Minister

Email: aherrera@uuabq.org

As Minister, Angela holds the RE portfolio and is the direct supervisor of the Director of Religious Education (Mia) and participates in a meaningful way in the RE Council, Children's Chapel, and Teacher's Luncheons.

Staff

Mia Noren, Director of Religious Education

Email: dre@uuabq.org

As the Director of Religious Education, Mia is responsible for supervising RE staff and volunteers, RE programs, planning, curriculum, and community activities in keeping with UU principles and First Unitarian vision.

James Galasinski, Youth Coordinator

Email: jamesg@uuabq.org

As Youth Coordinator, James is part of the RE staff who works with the mid-high and high school youth and their advisors on programming, community-wide, and District-wide activities.

2016 Calendar

Our program year starts in August each year. In addition to the 2015 – 2016 Children Calendar on the next page, there are OWL classes, Coming of Age and Bridging Ceremony in the spring each year. Also the UU Kids Camp is held in July each year.

2015 – 2016 RE Children Calendar

August 2015

August 23 – Intergenerational Service- Animal Blessing – NO RE CLASSES!

August 29 – 9am-2:30 pm Mid-High and High School Advisor Training

Aug. 30 – Connections Sunday/Teacher Training/Teacher Holiday

September 2015

Sept. 6th – Labor Day! Teacher Holiday

Sept. 13 start in Sanct./ Fall Curriculum Class #1

Sept. 20 – Fall Curriculum Class #2

Sept. 27 – Children’s Chapel./ Fall Curriculum Class #3

October 2015

Oct. 4 – start in Sanct. /RE Fall Curric Class #4

Oct. 11 – Fall Break! Teacher Holiday

Oct. 18 – RE Fall Curriculum Class #5

Oct. 25 - start in Sanct./RE Fall Curriculum Class #6 & Halloween Parade in the Sanctuary!

November 2015

Nov. 1 – Start in Sanct./RE Fall Curriculum Class #7

Nov. 8 - RE Fall Curriculum Class #8

Nov. 15 - RE Fall Curriculum Class #9

Nov. 22 –Children’s chapel/ RE Fall Curriculum Class #10

Nov. 29 – Thanksgiving! Teacher Holiday

December 2015

Dec. 6 – Start in Sanct./RE Fall Curric Class #11

Dec. 13 - RE Fall Curriculum Class #12

Dec. 20 - RE Fall Curriculum Class #13

Dec. 27 – no chapel /Winter Break! Teacher Holiday

January 2016

Jan. 3 – Start in Sanct./RE Spring Curriculum Class #1

Jan. 10 - RE Spring Curriculum Class #2

Jan. 17 - RE Spring Curriculum Class #3

Jan. 24 –Children’s Chapel/ RE Spring Curriculum Class #4

Jan. 31 – Teacher Holiday

February 2016

Feb.7 – Start in Sanct./ RE Spring Curric Class #5

Feb. 14 – Presidents Day! Teacher Holiday

Feb. 21 - RE Spring Curriculum Class #6

Feb. 28 – Children’s Chapel/RE Spring Curriculum Class #7

March 2016

Mar. 6 – Start in Sanct. /RE Spring Curriculum Class #8

Mar. 13 - RE Spring Curriculum Class #9

Mar. 20 - RE Spring Curriculum Class #10

Mar. 27 –Children’s Chapel/ Easter & Egg Hunt! NO RE CLASSES!

April 2016

Apr. 3 – Start in Sanct./RE Spring Curric Class #11

Apr. 10 - RE Spring Curriculum Class #12

Apr. 17 - – Children’s Chapel/Earth Day! Special Class

Apr. 24 :RE Spring Curriculum Class #14 RE Spring Curriculum Class #15

May 2016

May 1 – Start in Sanct./RE Spring Curriculum Class #14

May 8 - RE Spring Curriculum Class #15

May 15 - RE Spring Curriculum Class #16

May 22 –Children’s Chapel/ RE Mini Camp

May 29 – Field Day!

June 2016

June 5 –Start in Sanct./RE Summer Curriculum #1

June 12 - RE Summer Curriculum #2

June 19 - RE Summer Curriculum #3

June 26 – Children’s Chapel/RE Summer Curriculum #4

July 2016

July 3 – Start in Sanct./Fourth of July Teacher Holiday

July 10 - RE Summer Curriculum #5

July 17 - RE Summer Curriculum #6

July 24–Children’s Chapel/ RE Summer Curriculum #7

July 31 – Teacher Holiday

August 2016

Aug. 7 – Start in Sanct./RE Summer Curriculum #8

Aug. 14 – Back to School Sunday

Aug. 21 – Intergenerational Service/Animal Blessing. NO RE CLASS

UU Kids Camp

(<http://uukidscamp.blogspot.com/p/what-is-uu-kids-camp-uu-kids-camp-is.html>)

The UU Kids Camp is a week of camp experience in a UU values centered environment for 3rd graders to high school seniors. The Camp is held in July in the Sacramento Mountains in southwest New Mexico. The Camp is a separate, self-sustaining program with a volunteer planning committee liaison with RE Council, and volunteer staff. Donations can be made for scholarships for the Camp. We are entering into our 26th year of camp in 2016. Camp registration opens around April 1st.

2015 RE Council Annual Report

Carolyn Riggs, Chair

Council Members: Carol Cowan (August 2017), Geri Knoebel (August 2017; Chair starting January 2016), Benita Terrell (August 2017), Desiree Spielman (August 2017), Nicia Rae (August 2017) Ex-officio members: Mia Noren (DRE), James Galasinski (Ministerial Resident, Youth Program Coordinator 2015-2016 school year), Angela Herrera (Associate Minister). Outgoing committee Members: Heather Clark (term completed August 2015), Carolyn Riggs (term completed December 2015), Brian Tankersley (resigned June 2015), Erika Johnson-Jimenez (resigned November 2015), Micah Boutillier (resigned December 2015), Kim Boutillier (resigned December 2015).

The REC (Religious Education Council) had numerous member changes and multiple opportunities to reflect and transform in 2015. We continued using action teams to support specific RE tasks and programs for the first half of the year. Then through workshop and mini- retreat opportunities adopted a portfolio model with specific portfolio jobs such as President, Secretary, Curriculum Team Lead, Program Evaluation Team Lead. This new model and members taking these jobs has continued to change and adjust over the second half of the year. The REC intends to see all portfolio jobs filled and functioning in 2016.

The REC plans to have a full retreat in 2016. The REC has grown in its understanding and knowledge of our RE program, our church, and our denomination's RE history, trainings and resources through written and verbal reports from the DRE, Youth Program Coordinator and Associate Minister. Their commitment and involvement with the REC has been vital to our growth, direction, and accomplishments.

The REC supported and assisted RE staff with many projects and programs this year including the children's choir, youth choir, OWL (7-8 grade class) held in Spring

2015, teacher recruitment and training materials, UU Kids camp, RE volunteer appreciation event, and an extensive curriculum report and materials. We also continued to monitor and collaborate on RE policies and decisions including curriculum choices, classroom age divisions, RE calendar, playground rules, Youth Advisor policy and training, and La Amikoj Scholarship policy.

2015 Religious Education Annual Report

Mia Noren, Director of Religious Education

(full 2015 Annual Report: http://uuabq.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Annual_Report_20151.pdf)

RE Building and Grounds

A generous gift early in 2015 allowed many improvements to be made to the RE Building. Chief among those was the creation of a Children's Chapel in the foyer of the building. The RE library was moved to the south foyer. RE Rooms 3 and 2 were completely re-furnished and painted. Bulletin boards were installed in all of the classrooms and outside every classroom. All of the hallways and bathrooms were also painted. Thanks to the anonymous donors whose gift made this work possible, our RE space is now bright and inviting, with more joyful surroundings and a children's chapel that conveys the sacredness of our time together.

The RE Playgrounds also experienced refreshing. All interior chain link fence, dead trees, and broken or worn-out furniture were removed. Flower beds were re-planted, and shade covers were made for the shade structures. Trees were trimmed and an enormous amount of overgrowth was removed. Finally, the RE Playground areas were placed under the oversight of the landscape committee. Many hours of volunteer effort helped to re-brand our playgrounds as a welcoming place for children and their parents.

Registration Numbers

During the academic year, from September 2014 through August 2015, there were 175 individual children registered in the program. An additional 43 children participated in an unregistered status, attending three or more classes during the academic year. Children who participated in less than three classes were not included in the count. The children were managed on Sundays by 77 adult volunteers, 11 paid child care workers, and three staff, plus James Galasinski working as our youth coordinator.

Attendance numbers

Attendance numbers for the year for first service totaled 1,065, and for the second service total 2,270. OWL and Coming of Age individual attendance for the year equaled 225. Total instances of child attendance in an RE program equal 3,560 individual occurrences.

The total instances of adult attendance in children's RE numbered 1,168 individual occurrences.

Staffing

Mia Noren became DRE in January. A new RE Aide, Brie-Anne Stout, was hired in January. Alana Rodriguez remained as RE Administrative Assistant. The year has proved that we three RE staff make a great working team. James Galasinski spent his time as Youth Coordinator revamping Youth Advisor training and programs. While there was some movement of child care staff, the pool remained at 11. First Aid training was provided for office and child care staff in April. An RE Start-Up Workshop held in June and attended by staff, volunteers, and parents helped to refine expectations for staff and volunteers.

Teachers

Summer classes were staffed with volunteers by free sign-up. Fall classes were staffed with Teacher Teams. Most classes had a full roster of teams, and other parents signed up as 'floaters' and 'special events' volunteers, filling in any gaps. Teacher Luncheons, a monthly gathering hosted by the DRE and one of the ministers, and meant to honor and support volunteer teachers and foster community and spirituality, began in June.

Strategic Directions for Church Programs

January 2015

<http://uuabq.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/SPTF-Draft-Report-for-the-CONGREGATION-2015-03-15.pdf> (RE Full Text pages 5 – 7)

RE Vision

First Unitarian will build an RE program that is loved by our children and youth, highly valued by parents, and well supported by the congregation. Since this is a time of change for RE programs in all churches, we want to lead innovations in this area.

Religious Education for Children and Youth

Supporting the faith development of our children and youth and nurturing the bond to our shared faith through Religious Education (RE) programs is one of the most important things that we do as a church. There are several adjunct programs, such as “Our Whole Lives” (or OWL) and Summer Camp that are highly popular and successful. Summer Camp, in particular, integrates music, rituals, and leadership development into its structure and could provide a great source of vitality and be a model for the Sunday RE program. Two choirs – one for younger and one for older children – have recently been started and should help integrate children and music into the life of the congregation. The Coming of Age service is an important milestone and much beloved by the congregation. We have a core of deeply committed people who volunteer in the Sunday RE program and a large RE building that can accommodate many activities.

However, the RE program faces many deep challenges. There are children and youth who are not involved in the Sunday RE program in any way, which raises the question of whether the program does not serve their needs or meet their expectations or whether attending RE on Sunday mornings isn’t worth it compared to the many priorities that modern families must balance. The Director of Education position has turned over three times in the last five years. Each change of DRE has been associated with a change in the curriculum.

The RE program relies on a large volunteer force. Communication between the RE parents, volunteers, and RE staff has often been poor. Parents, the primary source of our volunteer force, have often had negative experiences and are reluctant to volunteer again. The RE program is not well integrated into the spiritual life of the church. Many parents feel that children are not welcome in the sanctuary, and many church members without young children are unaware of the needs of the RE program. In sum, there is a widespread sense of unease around the RE program.

The RE program needs sustained investment of our resources over the next five years. If we fail to connect our children to the UU faith, they may well drift away, with harmful results for the future strength of our Church.

Recommendations

There are four strategic priorities to pursue: build up the staff and volunteer capacity of the RE program, reimagine an RE program for the 21st century, strengthen the connections between the Sanctuary and the RE program, and improve communications at all levels, so that in five years we have a thriving, dynamic, RE program that is a central pillar of the First Unitarian Church.

I. Build up the staff and volunteer capacity of the RE program.

While the RE program needs major restructuring and commitment of resources over time, there are immediate steps that can be taken to improve the program in the short term.

Potential Actions

1. Develop and support the efforts of an energetic, visionary DRE with strong management and communication skills.
2. Rebuild the volunteer force by providing a range of meaningful volunteer opportunities and the tools to do a good job.
3. Improve communications with parents, teachers, youth, children, and RE staff.

II. Tailor our RE programs to meet the needs of 21st century families.

In order to work better for busy families, an RE program needs to include a sense of purpose and progression while not requiring attendance every week. The program needs to plan for intentional transitions between grade levels, connections among age groups, and opportunities to grow as leaders. In addition, RE should teach a range of spiritual rituals that children can draw upon throughout their lives, such as meditation and vespers.

While the RE program needs major restructuring and commitment of resources over time, there are immediate steps that can be taken to improve the program in the short term.

Potential Actions

1. Develop a series of steps with badges or ribbons to mark children's progress along a spiritual path to learn the UU faith and their own beliefs.
2. Engage children and youth through a robust annual calendar of events, overnights, and activities.
3. Integrate Summer Camp culture and leadership development.
4. Establish a schedule for children's chapel services in the RE building.

III. Strengthen connections between the sanctuary and the RE program.

We need to fully integrate our children into the life of the congregation and build a culture committed to investing in the development of the next generation of UUs.

Potential Actions

1. Implement a sustained communications campaign to ensure that children and families feel welcome in the sanctuary.
2. Synchronize the RE curriculum and activities with the church sermon and calendar.
3. Incorporate rites of passage for younger ages into sanctuary services (e.g., chalice lighting, reciting the Seven Principles, etc.).
4. Offer regular family rituals in the RE building.
5. Tap the energy, enthusiasm, and talents of the broader congregation to contribute to the RE program.

IV. Improve Communications.

Parents need to know what their children are learning and how to support their growth, volunteers need to know how they can meaningfully contribute, and the broader congregation needs to know how the RE program fits into the life of the church.

Potential Actions

1. The DRE becomes the central hub for communication to parents, volunteers, and the Congregation.
2. Information about the entire RE program – its overall progression, curriculum for each grade level, and operational needs and procedures – is available online and communicated in person on a regular basis, especially at the start of each school year.
3. Technology is used to build the social bonds of the RE community (e.g. Facebook groups, meet-up pages, and the church website).
4. At the start of each school year, the DRE communicates with La Amikoj about volunteer opportunities throughout the year, and La Amikoj decides what role to take in RE for younger children and other church events.

Strategic Plan Update – October 2015

During 2014, a dedicated team of First Unitarian Church volunteers and staff compiled a Strategic Plan, which identified 5 focus areas (and associated recommendations) to better serve our members and the Church's Mission. The strategies and recommendations were drafted to guide roughly five years of improvement activity, from 2015-2019. The three focus areas are: Religious

Education, Social Bonds, and Social Justice. This summary is for the R.E. Program. The full Strategic Plan can be found at <http://uuabq.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/SPTF-Draft-Report-for-the-CONGREGATION-2015-03-15.pdf>.

The Church Board of Directors is partnering with committee and staff leaders to provide occasional updates on the work being done for these strategic focus areas. This update summarizes some of the key activity and progress being made as of October 2015. Below you will find the RE-related updates. The updates for all focus areas can be found at <http://uuabq.com/strategic-plan/>

Religious Education – Recommendations

- Build up the staff and volunteer capacity of the RE program.
- Tailor our RE program to meet the needs of 21st century families.
- Strengthen connections between the sanctuary and the RE program.
- Improve Communications.

February 2016 RE Strategic Plan Update

<http://uuabq.com/strategic-plan/>

We are very grateful to have had a seamless transition between the fall and winter/spring sessions, thanks to our RE staff and volunteers. This year, families can look forward to the beginning of regular picnics on the church playground, as well as special events to foster our sense of community. Monthly teacher luncheons with the DRE and a minister continue to support and appreciate RE teachers. Teachers also operate in teaching teams. Both are part of a strategy to not only support volunteers and build up their capacity, but also to increase the sense of community in RE by bringing people together.

Last spring, a well-attended picnic was held for all RE families and volunteers, and in July the RE Council held a retreat in which they adopted a new method of shared leadership that paves the way for the RE program to be more effective and visionary. The RE Council is living into its new model of shared leadership, with increased focus on Community Building, RE Buildings and Grounds, and Curriculum. Monthly minister-led children's chapel services and a children's table in the back of the sanctuary, as well as regular family-friendly announcements from the pulpit—continue to help bridge the gap between RE and the sanctuary.

We expect RE to be further enhanced with the addition of our new Music Director, who will engage in music with members of all ages. Also with the new web site, we have a more intuitive and appealing set of pages describing our RE programs and encouraging participation.