

Philosophy of Religious Education

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1. At the heart of my philosophy of UU religious education is my belief in the development of a strong foundation in the covenantal nature of our religion, that central to our faith is not a set of beliefs, but the commitment of compassion and care we make to ourselves, each other, and to the world. I believe in teaching young people to honor this commitment on all levels as they move through the world, and in teaching them how to restore this commitment when we stray from it. I believe the curriculum should prioritize opportunities to develop interpersonal connections and connections with those beyond our church walls, as well as opportunities to connect with nature.
2. I believe children learn most about their faith by living it and through a continuous process of self-discovery. Thus religious education should be as experiential and exploratory as possible, with a focus on hands-on activities that engage students on multiple levels. I believe it is essential for children to fully engage with the material they are learning about through the use of a diversity of learning activities, such as movement, art, music, play, conversation, outdoor exploration, etc., so that students of all learning styles and abilities are able to find meaning.
3. I believe in empowering the next generation of Unitarian Universalists. I believe in supporting them in living out their faith into the world through service and social justice. It is critical to nurture a sense of their self-efficacy and strength, of the role they each play in helping to heal the world. A crucial part of that empowerment is teaching them to look inward at where they are falling short of their ideals, and giving them the tools to begin to go beyond fragility and defensiveness to self-awareness and personal improvement. In addition, young people should be empowered to take on developmentally appropriate roles in developing their own religious education experience and in forging their own Unitarian Universalist identity and growing into strong, independent Unitarian Universalist adults.
4. I believe in teaching young people how to begin their life-long search for wisdom, that truth resides in an infinite number of sources, from sacred texts from all faiths to secular works to the personal wisdom of those we encounter in our journeys. I believe in encouraging young people to pursue diverse explorations. With this freedom, it is also essential to teach the importance of critical thinking, of the application of reason, and to celebrate the asking of questions.
5. While I strongly appreciate the intellectual tradition of Unitarian Universalism, I also believe in developing other aspects of our spiritual beings – the emotional, the intuitive, the symbolic. I believe in the importance of ritual in the lives of children, of the creation of sacred space, in the cultivation of the feeling of wonder and joy. I believe in the importance of the body in our spiritual life, from the use of embodied prayer in worship to a development of healthy attitudes toward sexuality in our OWL programs.
6. I believe in striving to create an environment that is inclusive to all students, from diverse backgrounds, ages, abilities, and learning styles, and working in collaboration with students and

their families to adapt curriculum and teaching practices to accommodate the unique spiritual needs and learning styles of each individual. I believe in meeting young people where they are at and as who they are, providing religious education that meets their actual spiritual needs, not the needs we assume they should have. I recognize that this is much easier said than done, and requires constant effort, attentiveness, self-assessment, and the ability of teachers and coordinators to be open to new ideas and learning new lessons. It is a path I am deeply committed to walking with an open heart.