

Religious Exploration & Education For Children & Youth

Teacher Handbook 2023/24



Westminster Unitarian Church

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*The function of the church for both young and old is not to give us
certain religious kinds of experiences on Sunday,
but to teach us to put religious and ethical qualities
into all kinds of experiences.*

Sophia Lyon Fahs (1876 – 1978)

Table of Contents*

About this Handbook	3
Goals for Youth Religious Education	4
Security, Safety, and Supervision	
In Case of Emergency	5
Injury Report	6
Other Guidelines and Procedures	7
Trips Near and Far: Guidelines	8
Safe Congregations Policy	9
Conduct for Individuals Working with Children and Youth	10-11
Guidelines and Schedules	
Your Classroom	12
Sunday Morning Logistics and Preparation	13
Materials and Supplies Available for Classes	14
Learning and Classroom Management	
Curricula and Lesson Planning	15-17
Classroom Management at Our Church	18
Behavior Management Guidelines	19-20
Frequently Asked Questions	21-23
Thank you	

**Portions of this document have been adapted with permission from The First Unitarian Church of Dallas RE Manual.*

About this Handbook

Thank you for volunteering in Westminster's Religious Education program for the 2023-24 year. This handbook attempts to answer some of the frequently asked questions teachers and advisers have about their classroom, their preparation responsibilities and the resources that are available to them.

In no way does this handbook cover everything you will need to know! Please ask questions as they arise. We are glad to work with you to help you avoid and/or solve problems. If you have any questions or concerns, you may call or e-mail, or leave a written note in your session folder or in the RE mailbox in the office.

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Goals for Youth Religious Exploration & Education

The goal of our youth religious exploration & education program is to foster:

- ethical development and empathy
- spiritual growth
- equitable community
- an understanding of what it means to be Unitarian Universalist

Youth religious education includes:

- Worship experiences
- Time for fellowship, building friendships and community
- Learning experiences on religious or spiritual themes
- Opportunities for leadership development
- Opportunities for social action

The foundations are:

- our understanding of human development (including faith development)
- our Principles and Purposes

Some basic assumptions are:

- parents are their children's primary religious educators
- religious education happens anywhere, not just in class

There are several major strands within our curriculum:

- history, heritage and polity of Unitarian Universalism
- UU theology and spiritual practices
- comparative religions
- worship
- development of ethical framework and empathy
- community building
- social action

These strands are woven together throughout the program, although any given year may emphasize certain strands more than others.

In Case of Emergency

Children's medical issues and allergies

Each session folder (located in the wall pocket by each classroom door) contains a listing of emergency contact information and medical issues that were noted in the registration forms. Throughout the year the DSD will note changes about allergies or other medical issues for children in your class. Let us know immediately if the emergency information is missing from your session folder.

Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are located in each area of the building. Look for the one nearest you, and be sure you know how to operate it. Do not attempt to extinguish large fires. In case of a large fire, call out "fire" to alert others in the building and evacuate your class from the building.

Evacuation due to fire or fire drill

- Assign an adult to check closets, corners, bathrooms or other hiding spots in your areas to gather stray children.
- Take your attendance list and session folder with you.
- Evacuate your class to the northwest corner of the parking lot
- Take attendance to be sure all of your children are there.
- If a child is missing, notify the emergency personnel immediately.

First-Aid Supplies

Band-aids and minor medical supplies are located in a first aid kit near the bathroom upstairs and on the RE desk in the office. Please notify the DSD of all incidents (even if it is just a band-aid), and fill out an injury report form, located with the first aid kit.

Bodily Fluid Clean Up

Rubber gloves are located with each first aid kit. Always wear rubber gloves to clean up vomit, urine, blood or other bodily fluids. Advise church staff that there has been a spill so that follow-up cleaning can be done.

Always notify the DSD of any emergency or injury.

Westminster Unitarian Church Injury Report

Use this form whenever providing any first aid (even a band-aid) to a legal minor.

Date and Time:

Age group:

Your name:

Your co-teacher:

Name of child to whom first aid was given:

What first aid did you give?

Please briefly describe the incident that resulted in the need for first aid.

Who witnessed this incident?

_____ Initial and date here if you gave parents/guardians a copy of this form.

Thank you for handling this incident!

_____ Date received _____
Received/Signature of DSD

Other Guidelines and Procedures

Arrival and Departure of Children

Parents/guardians are responsible for their children before and after classes, and while children are in the church services. Teachers are NOT responsible for supervising children before the class begins. If an unaccompanied child shows up early, please welcome the child, be sure there is a second adult present, and follow up later with the parent (ask the DSD for help if needed).

- **All parents/guardians of children Grade 2 and younger must come to the classroom to pick up their child at the end of class.** If parents do not arrive on time, teachers may take remaining children to coffee hour to find their parents.
- Children in Grade 3+ may be dismissed to coffee hour to find their parents.
- Children may be released only to their parents/guardians unless they have made prior arrangements with the DSD.

Two Adult Rule

Any time one or more children are participating in religious education programming without a parent/guardian, at least two *unrelated, background-checked* adults must be present to supervise. This includes classrooms, outside grounds and field trips. Two adults are scheduled for all classes – please tell the DSD immediately if you find that you are the only adult in the room.

Restroom Procedure

If a child needs to go to the bathroom during class, the classroom door should be left open and one teacher aware of the location of the child at all times. Adults should not go into the restroom with the child unless needed, and then only with a witness and/or with the door open.

- An adult must never go into a restroom with a child with the door closed.
- Assist the child with clothing only as needed.
- Adults must wash hands before and after assisting a child in the restroom.
- Any wiping of a child's genital area or removal of clothes will be done only as required, in the restroom with the door open, and witnessed.

Trips Near and Far: Guidelines

When planning a church-sponsored trip, whether the destination is nearby or far away, please alert the DSD, Neighboring Faiths Coordinator (if applicable) and parents as far in advance as possible.

Drivers:

- must be at least 25 years of age
- must have had criminal background check at Westminster within past 2 years
- must provide proof of insurance, and a valid driver's license (DSD will keep copies on file)
- must ensure that everyone wears a functioning seat belt, and must follow state laws regarding the use of car seats and booster seats.
- must not be sleep deprived, consume alcohol or use any form of drug (prescription or non-prescription) that can affect physical or mental performance while driving.

The Westminster community relies on individuals to monitor their own fitness to drive on any particular occasion; however, the trip leader is expected to remove any driver for whom there is a reasonable suspicion of impaired driving ability.

Safer Congregations Policies:

- Two *unrelated, background-checked* adults in each vehicle if possible
- One *background-checked* adult in a vehicle may be authorized if there are at least two unrelated minors in the vehicle.
- If sufficient background-checked adults cannot be found, the trip is cancelled. No exceptions.
- All vehicles should go directly to the destination, and upon arrival at the destination, a minimum of two adults must accompany the group of children or youth.
- When possible, vehicles traveling together should make coordinated stops.
- Drivers other than the parent/guardian are not allowed to drive children or youth home following a trip, except by prior arrangement with parent/guardian. Trip leaders are responsible for ensuring that children/youth are picked up by an authorized adult.

Permission:

- When children are to be taken off church grounds, the parent/guardian's permission must be obtained and medical release form must be in the possession of the driver and lead teacher.

If there is no permission/release form, the child may not participate in the field trip. No exceptions.

Safer Congregations

Westminster Safer Congregations Policy (pdf available on website):

- Teachers and Mentors must have criminal background checks
- Teachers sign Code of Conduct Form
- As always, remember the **Two Adult Rule**

If you suspect a child has been abused or neglected:

Rhode Island law requires you to report your suspicion of abuse or neglect to the authorities such as local law enforcement offices or the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families at 1(800) RI-CHILD. The minister can discuss this with you and provide support.

RI State Law:

§ 40-11-3 Duty to report ... (a) Any person who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that any child has been abused or neglected as defined in § 40-11-2 or has been a victim of sexual abuse by another child shall, within twenty-four (24) hours, transfer that information to the department of children, youth and families.

For concerns connected with Westminster, please alert the Minister immediately.

Conduct for Individuals Working with Children and Youth

Those who work with young people at Westminster are expected to always have the best interests of the children and youth at heart. They are expected to nurture the young people's physical, emotional and spiritual growth in an environment of kindness, trust, respect and fun. The Westminster community strives to create an environment in which children and youth are able to explore the spiritual and religious aspects of their lives. The behavior of those who are involved with children and youth is expected to be consistent with this goal at all times.

Certain minimal specific expectations, intended to further this goal, include:

1. *Child Abuse* - is prohibited in any form, including:

Physical abuse – bodily injury to a person. Examples of prohibited behavior include, but are not limited to, corporal punishment, hitting, pinching, pushing, kicking or shoving a child or youth.

Physical neglect – the failure to adequately provide the essential of life, such as – food, shelter, clothing and medical care.

Sexual abuse – the exploitation of a child or youth for the gratification of an adult abuse. Examples of prohibited behavior include, but are not limited to, inappropriate touching, intercourse, incest, rape and sodomy, as well as exhibitionism, voyeurism and the use of minors in pornography.

Emotional abuse – the failure to provide care, support and psychological development. This includes verbal abuse, such as excessive teasing, belittling and rejection. Examples of prohibited behavior include, but are not limited to, yelling, abusive language, using profanities and threatening a child or youth.

2. *Isolated Contact with Youth* - Volunteers are not permitted to be with a child or youth (who is not their own child) alone, in a youth room, or without another *unrelated, background-checked* adult in the immediate vicinity.

3. *Friendship with Youth* – although we hope that youth and adults will have a genuine fondness for one another, any adult who looks to youth for friendship is not

sufficiently mature to be in a position of responsibility over youth. In the adult/youth relationship, the adult assumes primary responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries and cultivating an atmosphere of health and trust. It is the adult's responsibility to avoid inappropriate relationships.

4. *Unofficial Contact with Youth* – Westminster takes no responsibility for monitoring unofficial contact between youth and adults outside of Westminster activities; thus, any such contact is at the discretion of the parents/guardians involved. Those who work with children and youth are in a position of responsibility and are expected to act accordingly and to ensure that parents/guardians are aware of and approve any unofficial contact.
5. *Sexualized behavior* – is never appropriate to engage in any manner of sexualized behavior with a child or youth. This refers not only to explicitly sexual behavior, but also to sexually provocative behavior or language. It is inappropriate to tell jokes with sexual content. Physical expressions of affection such as hugs certainly have their place, but it is best to allow the child or youth to initiate them, and the adult must remain mindful of the tenor of the physical contact. In general, it is best to turn slightly away from the child during a hug to avoid frontal contact.
6. *Confidentiality* – In some situations, such as certain OWL, Coming-of-Age classes and mentoring, and youth group meetings and activities, there is an expectation of confidentiality with regard to classroom discussions. This means that participants, both youth and adult, will generally not discuss the confidential subject matter with others. However, if an adult learns about a serious matter that relates to a child or youth (e.g., the child or youth is the victim of abuse, is suicidal, has a serious drug problem, etc.), such information **MUST** be communicated to the WUC professional staff (Minister) immediately, and may also be required to be reported to the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families. Adults should avoid giving children and youth the impression they will keep such matters a secret.
7. *Tobacco, Drugs and Alcohol* - Adults shall not be under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs, and shall not use tobacco, while working with children or youth, either at Westminster or off-site. Adults also shall not encourage tobacco, drug or alcohol use, or permit children and youth under their supervision to use tobacco, drugs, or alcohol.

Your Classroom

We hope you will find our classrooms neat, clean and well-stocked with the supplies you will need from week to week. We have done some minimal decorating, but please do not hesitate to bring in other items to brighten the room and make it feel comfortable. You may wish to involve the children by displaying their artwork and/or photos of the class. We ask that while decorating you follow these policies:

- Help yourself to supplies. Please leave the supplies neatly organized for the next person. Let the DSD know if you use a lot of an item, or if we appear to be close to running out of something.
- If displaying photos, do not attach names, and check with the DSD first to identify any children who should not be photographed (information about photo permission status is provided for all participants).
- Display posters, pictures, etc. on bulletin boards using tacks or pushpins. Do not glue or tape items to bulletin boards. Painter's tape may be used to attach items to walls for short periods of time.
- Do not tape anything to whiteboards.
- Use only whiteboard markers on whiteboards.
- To avoid cluttered classrooms, change your bulletin boards each term and send artwork and crafts home with the children.
- Our sexton removes trash from the classrooms, kitchen, and common rooms every week. If your class generates more trash or recycling than the bins can hold, please take trash bags to the trash bins located at the rear of the building.
- Notify the DSD of any needed repairs to your room, or any occasions when the room is not set up for your use when you arrive.

Sunday Morning Logistics

- Teachers should arrive no later than **9:45 AM** (earlier if more time is needed to prepare for class). All preparations should be complete by 9:00.
- Remember the **Two Adult Rule!** If you cannot teach, it is your responsibility to arrange a substitute, and let the DSD know. If you find that you are the only adult in your classroom, let the DSD know immediately – even if you are capable of teaching by yourself, don't do it. Remember all substitutes need to have been background-checked, and must be unrelated to the other teacher.
- All children will begin together at 10:00 AM, either in the service for Time for All Ages or in their classroom. Check white board in the morning to make sure your room location has not changed.
- Please take **attendance** on the form provided.
- Parents/Guardians of new children and youth should complete a registration form on Breeze before they arrive. Please ask them to fill out a registration form on the RE Ipad if child or youth arrives without one, and let the DSD know there is a new child in your classroom.
- Please do not allow food in preK – grade 5 classrooms, except as needed for the curriculum. When food is used, be aware of any food allergies and try to avoid food/drink that is likely to stain the carpet.
- Please provide feedback on the lessons, and any other aspect of the teaching experience so the DSD and YRE Committee may adapt future lessons as needed.
- Please leave the classroom ready for others to use. If it was not ready for your use when you arrived, please tell the DSD.
- If you're teaching more than one class in a row, before you leave, check ahead to the next session(s) in the curriculum, noting any special supplies needed. Ask/email the DSD to order supplies needed.
- Please check church supplies before buying materials, and always check with the DSD before making any purchase.

Materials and Supplies Available for Use

In most cases, the “week-to-week” supplies are available in your classroom, or in the closet of the large classroom. Special supplies (cooking supplies, video or film, religious artifacts, special art supplies, extra equipment, etc.) may not be readily available. Please discuss special requests with the DSD at least a week in advance.

Please remember to email the DSD when supplies begin to run low, so we can avoid shortages of supplies needed for lessons.

Basic Supplies Usually Available

In Each Classroom

Basic supplies including: pens, pencils, tape, glue sticks, markers, crayons, stapler, rulers, paper, hole punch, scissors (adult and child), Kleenex

In the Large Classroom (Classroom 5 / Youth Chapel room)

Many books, including reference books, bibles, and story books

Supply Closet (some of what’s available)

Paper such as poster board, magazines, construction paper, flip charts, wrapping paper, tissue paper

Craft supplies such as beads, sequins, plastic bags, pipe cleaners, yarn, fabric, ribbon, string, glitter, clay, playdough, stamp pads

Paint, water colors, brushes, paint holders, tarps, old shirts

Extra classroom basics pencils, crayons, white-board markers and cleaner

RE Storage (In bins in the “storage classroom”)

Costumes, decorations, supplies for holidays, and other supplies needed, decorations.

2023/24 CURRICULA

Fall Semester: Sep 17- Dec 10, 2023

Spring Semester: Jan 7 – May 17, 2024

Nursery:

We provide our youngest children with a safe, welcoming space to play and develop friendships. Babies 6 mos. to age 4 are welcome in this childcare room from September to June during 10am worship services. Childcare up to Pre-K available during multi-generation worship. Young children are also welcome to attend services with parents in the VIP area of the sanctuary, if desired.

Kindergarten-Gr. 2 FALL: Soul Matters & Social Emotional Learning

The children are introduced to our UU Principles and worship themes in an age-appropriate manner, enhanced by a fun and engaging activity that supports Social Emotional Learning to build a sense of belonging in community.

Kindergarten-Gr. 1 SPRING: Our Whole Lives (OWL)

Children are invited to participate in this comprehensive sexuality education program that supports parents in educating children about birth, babies, bodies and families. Following a Parent Meeting and Parent/Child Orientation, the 8 sessions (taught by trained facilitators) engage children with stories, songs and activities and include projects for parents and children to do together to promote dialogue.

Grades 3-5 FALL: Soul Matters & Social Emotional Learning

Like the K-2 class, the 3-5 class follows an age-appropriate Soul Matters/SEL curriculum in the fall.

Grades 4-6 SPRING: Our Whole Lives (OWL)

Our Whole Lives Gr 4-6 in the spring (3rd graders will join the K-2 class). The 10-session OWL program, led by trained teachers, will teach children about the physical and emotional changes of puberty, examining topics such as values, sexuality, body image, peer pressure, social media /internet, and gender identity /roles using fact-based, age- appropriate materials.

Grades 6-8 FALL: Heeding the Call: Qualities of a Justice-Maker

Curriculum: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/call>

Heeding the Call is a social justice curriculum that not only explores linked oppressions in our society, but also encourages participants towards personal growth in values that counteract the marginalization of others. Workshops on empathy, courage, abundance, joy, and other qualities ask participants to recognize how these standards can be tools for justice. The program also includes more concrete tools, such as tips on how to be a good ally and the language of conflict resolution.

Grades 6-8 SPRING: Social Justice Project

In a collaboration with SEEJ (Social, Economical, Environmental Justice Committee) the social justice project is a youth-driven, adult-coordinated experience that takes the children through the stages of a fund-raising project. Youth have made and sold name tags, decorative pins, baked goods, and held car washes. Past groups have raised funds for victims of the Puerto Rican hurricane, Syrian refugees in RI, LGBTQ youth, and homeless mentally ill.

Grades 9-12: Coming of Age Belonging (if numbers) & Second Sundays/Youth Group

High school students will meet with permanent co-facilitators every second Sunday of the month starting in October at 11am. The 2023/24 program is designed to support the youth in re-developing and re-defining a youth-led social and social action group. Activities may include field trips, service projects, youth worship services and district-wide CONS (youth conferences) throughout the year.

Lesson Planning Suggestions:

- All lessons for grades K-5 are set up to be successfully taught as is. However, you can adapt to your style, the children's background or personalities, or current events. Where possible, please discuss significant modifications ahead of time with the DSD.
- In most cases, lessons will be sent out to you one week in advance of your class. Review the lesson ahead of time – prepare sufficiently so you are minimally dependent on the printed material when teaching.
- Get/request all materials ahead of time – ask for help if you need it.
- Remember the social needs of the children – allow time in each class to build community.
- Have a back-up plan of a simple, fun activity, so you can change course if you find the lesson is going poorly, or too quickly.
- Keep opening and closing rituals constant throughout the year. We will generally begin each session with a chalice “lighting” (with electric dandles for safety) and a brief checkin/and or sharing of joys and sorrows “peaks, valleys & climbs” / “roses, buds & thorns” / “glads & sads”. And we’ll close each session with an extinguishing of the chalice.

For the K-2, the chalice lighting or extinguishing may be accompanied by:
We are Unitarian Universalists (hold up two hands making “U” shapes)
This is a church where we can open our minds (bring hands outward from head)
Love with our hearts (cross hands over heart)
And help with our hands. (hold out open hands)
Together we care for the earth (hands toward earth)
And build friendship and peace in our world. (touch elbows with others)

- Even if you run out of time and do not complete the lesson, include a closing.

Tips for Classroom Management

1. **Model the behavior you expect:** be kind, respectful, fair and admit your mistakes.
2. **Make your expectations clear.** Know your discipline policy and follow it. Special focus on the behavioral covenant at the start of class can help.
3. **Use positive reinforcement** – notice and commend children who are doing what is asked of them. Try to look for things that the child is doing right and reward them for that, more than correcting undesirable behavior.
4. **Be prepared to lead the session** (be organized).
5. **Try to keep the youth engaged:** mix media and types of activities use props and visuals give students something active to do (service project, roleplay, games) have a backup plan be familiar with the lesson so that you do not have to read it in class.
6. **Provide continuity** of routine and instruction from week to week.
7. **Where appropriate, follow where the children's discussion leads.** If a child has a significant concern, our church is the place to hear it.
8. **Avoid confrontation in front of the group** ignore or redirect when possible
9. **Tell the children that they will be spoken to if they are disrupting the class.** After the second request, if the child is still unable to settle down, the assistant teacher can take the child out of the circle or activity and talk with the child. If the child is not able to get him or herself under control, the teacher can bring the child to the DSD, who will take care of the immediate problem and begin work toward long term solutions. For more details, please refer to the Behavior Management Guidelines on pages 19-20.
10. **Ask for help.** The DSD is available to come into the classroom to observe and consult, or help in other ways if needed. Don't wait too long to get help. Even one child with ongoing behavior problems can disrupt a group. Some children have a difficult time adjusting to our church youth programming, and sometimes we need to work as a team (child, parents, DSD and teachers) to make it work.

Behavior Management Guidelines

RE RELATIONAL COVENANT

The promises we make about how we will treat each other and what we will do to create a safe and sacred space is called a covenant. This is our covenant:

We respect everyone with our words and actions.

We are kind and work together to be fair to everyone.

We encourage one another to grow in spiritual ways.

We support each person's search for what is right and true in life.

We listen to our inner voice and to the hopes and concerns of others.

We work together to make our world peaceful, free, and fair.

We care for the Earth, its creatures, and our surroundings.

Families are asked to agree to this covenant when enrolling in the RE program.

We all make mistakes at times or fail to live up to the promises we have made to one another. At those times, we will lovingly remind each other of our better selves. It is important to remember that behind any misbehavior, there is a need that is not being met. Teachers are encouraged to start from a place of inquiry with a child before turning to discipline.

Procedure for when children or youth break covenant:

1. The teacher or classroom assistant quietly asks the child/youth what is going on for them to try to understand the unmet need. The adult might make modifications to attempt to meet the child's need (i.e. give them a sense ball for tangible stimulation, or crayons to color so they can listen better).
2. If this does not help, the adult immediately offers a quiet reminder that the behavior is out of bounds.
3. If behavior continues...The adult and child/youth hold a private conversation.
4. If needed... The child/youth has a private conversation with the DSD, who will then get in touch with the parents.
5. After a family conversation...The parents contact the DSD to indicate whether the child/youth understands the behavior was unacceptable and agrees to work harder to keep the covenant.
6. In the case of repeated difficulties, a parent/guardian may be asked to supervise the child/youth for an agreed upon time or the child/youth may be asked to take a break from Religious Education programs.

ENSURING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND A LOVING COMMUNITY

(Credit goes to All Souls Unitarian Parent & Teacher Handbook for parts of this section.)

We seek to engage children and youth within an atmosphere of mutual respect and kindness. Through classes and activities, we hope each child comes to know the value of a loving community. To build this community, we offer opportunities to cooperate and listen to both adults and peers, as we all grow in knowledge about life, love and the mysteries of existence. We offer children an opportunity to practice the skills necessary to be in community. In order to ensure a safe learning environment for all participants, we expect a disciplined method of interacting, primarily guided by respect and gentleness.

Each of the following contributes to this positive RE experience for our children and volunteer teachers.

1. Teachers develop and use rituals to set a positive tone. Maintaining regular structure helps students know what to expect and how to interact.
2. Teachers review the Covenant weekly (especially at the beginning of a new class) and relate behavior back to the covenant, which helps children learn our UU Principles and practice them in a way that contributes to the well-being of themselves and the class. Parents are encouraged to keep a copy of the UU Principles visible in their home and refer to them often.
3. Rather than correcting behavior (i.e. "Don't run"), teachers are encouraged to use positive language to ask for more of the desired behavior (i.e. "Walk in the hallway"). Further examples include: "Use inside voices", "Take turns to speak", "Keep hands to self", "Be respectful with our words and actions".
4. Teachers are asked to consider misbehavior as a learning opportunity. When misbehavior occurs, teachers follow the steps outlined in the Relational Covenant. They use neutral body language, with a kind and firm manner.
5. Teachers remember that children are motivated by needs for belonging, significance, and fun. A child who continues to misbehave is attempting to meet one of these needs. Teachers will examine the classroom layout, teaching style, activity choices, and student interactions to see where adjustments can be made to support all children meeting these needs.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What time should I arrive on Sunday mornings?

Please arrive no later than 9:45 so you are prepared to welcome students by 10:00.

2. What do I do with my own children while I am preparing for class?

They can remain with you; or, if you need childcare while you set up, let the DSD know ahead of time.

3. When is class dismissed?

11:15. Try to be on time with younger children; with older children, you can take a few extra minutes if you need them.

4. What is the procedure for dismissal?

Children in the Nursery must be picked up in the Nursery room and signed out by a parent/guardian. Children in Grades K-2 must be picked up in the classroom by a parent/guardian. Older children may walk down to coffee hour themselves, but should be supervised.

5. What do I do if I need a substitute?

First ask a teacher for your same grade, in a different term. Then ask one of the designated subs. As a last resort, contact the DSD or your class coordinator – remember that all subs need a background check.

6. How much time is needed for preparation?

Most sessions are set up to require minimal preparation beyond review of the plan. However, a few require a bit more. Generally, 30-60 min per week will be sufficient, but there may be some variation from class-to-class, and from teacher to teacher. Planning ahead will make your classroom time go more smoothly.

7. Who cleans what?

Your classroom should be clean when you arrive. Tell the DSD if it is not. The sexton will vacuum and empty the trash and recycling; otherwise, please leave the room as you found it.

8. What are expectations for classroom behavior?

The group will set some expectations in the class covenant. Otherwise, behavior should be safe and respectful of everyone. Different teachers may have slightly different expectations – this is fine, but be sure your expectations are clear and consistent. Revisiting the Behavioral Covenant regularly can be a valuable tool.

9. What is the policy regarding cell phones and electronic devices?

Generally, no such devices should be used in class for personal matters, and teachers should model this behavior. All electronic devices should be in off/silence mode during class time. However, to the extent that such devices are useful for exploring the topic and are not a distraction, you may choose to permit their use. Walkie-talkies will be distributed to each class on Sunday mornings. These will be used in the event of an emergency to communicate with the DSD and other WUC staff.

10. How do I take attendance?

An attendance form is provided each week in the session folder.

11. What should I do about visitors?

The DSD will provide the RE Ipad so new children can be registered on Breeze as new members or visitors. If not, available, please give a registration form (in your session folder) to the parent/guardian to fill out before they leave the child with you, if possible. If not, welcome the child anyway, mark them on the attendance sheet, and alert the DSD to the presence of an unregistered child.

12. How do I get reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses?

Submit a reimbursement form to the DSD. Please clear expenses with the DSD ahead of time (so we stay within our budget).

13. What if I don't finish a lesson?

Complete the closing anyway. Depending on the subject matter, you may decide to add some of what you omitted to the lesson next week, or not. Consult with your class coordinator if you are not sure.

14. What if I need something unusual?

Check with the DSD or your class coordinator at least a week ahead of the lesson to see if we have it. If not, work collaboratively to obtain it, or decide collectively on a substitute.

15. How can I get a copy of the sermon?

Copies of the sermon should be available in the office. Check with the office administrator if the sermon you are looking for is not there.

16. How do I contact the Director of Spiritual Development (DSD)?

The best way to reach me (Jeannette Bessinger) is via email at jbessinger@westminsteruu.org If you need to speak by phone or in person, we can speak immediately after RE class on Sunday or arrange for a convenient time during the week.

Jeannette Bessinger's office hours are Tuesdays (on campus) and Wednesday's and Thursdays (home office) 10-4.

Thank you!

We are very grateful to you for your willingness to share your time and energy with our young people in this congregational ministry we call youth religious exploration & education.



*The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own;
not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;
not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth;
not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs;
not to bind them by ineradicable prejudices to our particular sect or peculiar notions, but to prepare them for impartial conscientious judging of whatever subjects may be offered to their decision;
not to burden their memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought;
not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment.*

In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul, to excite and cherish spiritual life.

— William Ellery Channing (1780 - 1842)