



Dear East Shore Families,

We hope this letter finds you in good spirits and high anticipation for the vibrant journey that awaits us in our Religious Exploration (RE) program. And, if you are new here, we are thrilled to extend a warm welcome to you from East Shore Unitarian Congregation. At East Shore Kids, our purpose is to nurture children and families and foster a lifelong faith community for each other and future generations. We are committed to fostering a warm, inviting atmosphere for every child and youth.

Our approach centers on children and youth gathering in a learning community to explore shared values and embark on a journey of spiritual and emotional well-being. We embrace and celebrate all families and are mosaic of races, genders, abilities, and faith backgrounds, and we want your family to be reflected in our programs and leadership. We believe in empowering our young community members, from infants through high school, to help teach us our UU values of *love, community, justice, and spirituality*.

Here you will find dedicated grown-ups, comprised of the Director of Religious Education, RE Coordinator, and the Religious Education Team of Volunteers, all who work joyfully to ensure meaningful and safe experiences for your family. With the full support of congregation leadership, we understand the importance of open communication, the sanctity of family needs, and the shared responsibility we hold in nurturing a family's journey.

We understand that transitioning to a new congregation may bring about questions and uncertainties. We have a support system in place to assist new families, providing guidance and assistance during the beginning of your journey. In our quest to foster a strong sense of community, we offer personalized welcome meetings or orientations. This is an opportunity for new families to meet with us, ask questions, and gain a deeper understanding of our programs and community. Please reach out to us so we can connect.

In closing, we express our deepest gratitude for your involvement in the East Shore community. We are excited for the journey ahead, and we assure you that you are an integral part of our vibrant and welcoming community. We can't wait to welcome you and share the beauty and warmth of Unitarian Universalism with you!

With Love at the Center,

Amanda Alice Uluhan
Director of Religious Education
education@esuc.org

STAY INFORMED

We invite you to connect with us on social media, follow our congregation, and stay updated on various platforms for updates, event announcements, and a glimpse into our vibrant community.

Additionally, we encourage you to stay informed through our website, www.esuc.org/kids, where we highlight articles related to family engagement, volunteer opportunities, and faith-related discussions.

As we look ahead, we have exciting upcoming events, workshops, and family-friendly activities planned. We invite you to participate and benefit from these enriching experiences. These occasions are perfect opportunities for you to connect with other families and integrate seamlessly into our congregation. All of our events can be found through [our online calendar](#).

To stay updated with East Shore Families and receive weekly engaging emails, register and you will get signed up for our newsletters at [ESUC Kids Newsletters](#).

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

We invite you to engage with our congregation, explore our programs, and experience the warmth of our community. If you're interested in volunteering and contributing to our community, we have various opportunities for you to make a difference.

Sign up for a drop in Sunday from 10:30 AM to 11:45 AM. No prior experience is necessary; we'll provide training and materials. Caregivers join in this fun learning experience and help our lead instructors.

FIRST VISIT

All kids attending Sunday School will need to check in at the kiosk when they get to the congregation. You can make check-in fast and easy by registering your child in advance. When you arrive, head to East Shore Kids Kiosk to check in your family. We ask that you complete a new family registration form so that we can get to know you and your child. We'll then get your child checked in, answer any questions, and direct you to your child's class. If we need to contact you for any reason during the service, we'll use the number provided to call or text you.

INFORMATION GATHERED

To best serve your family, personal information such as birth dates and allergies are collected. This information will be entered into our secure database and will not be shared with third parties. This information is used to better equip us to serve your child, ensure safety, and provide the best possible experience.

CHECK-IN SYSTEM

Check-in begins 15 minutes prior to the worship service start time. We use a secure online check-in system. Children of any age are welcome to attend worship service with their families. Worship is a sacred and powerful way to nurture our faith

community and values. We have busy bags with books and coloring activities in the Sanctuary foyer, and an activity table and rug in the Sanctuary. There is an additional play area in the Administration building if you wish to have your children remain in your care.

FAMILY PRACTICES FOR FAITH AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

We believe like many experiences in life, how a family moves, learns, and grows together during their journey can be a transformative and life-altering experience. At East Shore, we are here to accompany your family on that spiritual journey and help to support and reinforce both our UU traditions and values, and the very sacred ones that you bring to us as well. To have an enriching experience, your participation as a primary caregiver is essential, and we are excited to embark on this meaningful journey together.

In order to create a thriving community and enrich your child's experience, we kindly ask for your partnership and engagement in the following ways:

- **Registration:** Provide us with essential information by registering children. This knowledge enables us to tailor our support to your family's specific needs.
- **Regular Attendance:** Attend our programs regularly and build relationships with members through all of our events and ministries.
- **Special Accommodations:** The more information volunteers and staff know about your family, the more we can accompany you in every way.
- **Grown-up Presence:** A responsible grown-up must remain at East Shore throughout all of our programs, unless otherwise specified (such as a youth overnight, or parent's night out). Should volunteers need your support, we will call or text message you.
- **Connect with RE Leaders:** Take a moment to introduce yourself to your child's RE leaders, both staff and volunteers. Your involvement and concerns are a priority for everyone.
- **Discuss Community Expectations and Goals:** Engage in conversations with children about our learning environment, what we expect to do together, and how we need their help and contributions.
- **Conversations at Home:** Engage your children in meaningful discussions about the importance of being a part of our community and the love that surrounds congregation attendance.
- **Volunteer Commitment:** Embrace the opportunity to volunteer in our program, as your involvement significantly contributes to the success of our RE endeavors.
- **Get to know the UU mission:** Participation in the life of our UU congregation develops not only your faith, but also that of your families.
- **Financial Support:** Contributing to the congregation and becoming involved in our leadership opportunities through membership ensures the vitality of our RE program and the legacy of this liberal faith tradition for the future.

MINISTRY PROGRAMS

While there are many ways for families to participate in the life of our community, our kids and youth groups are often some of the best environments for them. The ages listed in our programs are recommendations, not a hard rule. We want kids to be in the environment that is best for them.

- **Little UU's Early Learning (Infants-Pre-K):** In this nurturing and fun environment, our youngest members (Infants-Pre-K) are introduced to values and spiritual practices through play, sacred stories, crafts, games, music, and more.
- **Discovery Year Lower Elementary (Grades K-3):** For our Lower Elementary (Grades K-3), we offer interactive stories, song sharing circles, and small group experiences that enrich and continue their faith development in an age-appropriate and engaging manner.
- **Stepping Stones Upper Elementary (Grades 4-6):** Upper Elementary (Grades 4-6) children build on their foundations of Unitarian Universalist values through rich and creative learning environments. Our focus is on developing lasting friendships, articulating values, and building community through developmentally-appropriate small group experiences.
- **YES-UU (Junior High Youth - Ages 12-14):** Junior high youth have the opportunity to explore their spirituality and community through diverse curricula and engaging activities. They typically participate in Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education and Coming of Age youth development programs.
- **YUUP (High School Youth):** YUUP provides a safe and encouraging space for high school students to meet, engage with their values, and contribute to the ESUC vision and mission of an awesome and inclusive community. The program rotates between games, snacks, field trips, and youth conferences in the region. Kids are welcome to join for some or all events, and friends are always invited to join.

CURRICULUM

In Unitarian Universalist (UU) religious education programs, children and youth engage with curriculum designed to nurture spirituality and foster a sense of faith and belonging. The curriculum is typically designed to be interactive, engaging, and inclusive, allowing youth to actively participate to build trust and community in a lifelong UU community.

- **UU Principles and Sources:** Youth learn about the values, promises, and sources of UUism, all which form the foundation of UU beliefs and values.
- **Ethics and Morality:** Discussions and activities centered around moral and ethical decision-making, exploring topics like social justice, fairness, kindness, and empathy.
- **World Religions and Belief Systems:** An introduction to various world religions, belief systems, and philosophies, including in those of our families.
- **Social and Environmental Justice and Activism:** Education on social and environmental justice issues, human rights, and ways to actively engage in making a positive difference in their communities and the world.

- **Community Building and Relationships:** Focus on building healthy relationships, communication skills, conflict resolution, and understanding diversity and inclusion.
- **Personal Development and Growth:** Encouragement for self-reflection, understanding emotions, mindfulness, resilience, relationships, and well-being.
- **Spiritual Exploration:** Youth explore spirituality, beliefs, and values, and are encouraged to form an understanding of the divine and the universe.
- **Rituals, Traditions, and Celebrations:** Learning about UU rituals, traditions, and meaningful celebrations that inspire our community.
- **Interfaith Dialogue:** Encouraging conversations and understanding about other faiths and beliefs to promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation.
- **History of UUism:** Exploring the history and development of Unitarianism and Universalism and understanding how these traditions merged into the living tradition of Unitarian Universalism.

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Unitarian Universalist (UU) religious education programs pride ourselves on being cooperative and community-led. The cooperative spirit fosters a sense of shared ministry, creating a vibrant opportunity for everyone of all ages to contribute. Volunteers support each of our age-specific groups on Sundays through a philosophy of facilitation and mentorship. Volunteers also work together to run special events and programs, such as the winter pageant and bridging. Volunteers are supported by professional ministry staff every step of the way and are expected to consider volunteer an aspect of faith development. Older youth are also trained to work with our younger children.

VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

Volunteers promise to nurture the spiritual, social, emotional, and physical well-being of children and youth. We promise to listen, facilitate a warm and welcoming environment, and ensure they are sharing the gift of love. Together, we create spaces where children shine their lights brightly. We promise to work with families and ministry staff to always hold the needs of children in the highest priority, understanding the trust and responsibility of this charge.

OUR COVENANT

We come together with a commitment to a safe and welcoming community. We promise to practice kindness and respect to one another and share generously our Love as a gift. We promise to contribute to our learning community with curiosity and empathy.

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION AND SAFETY

- **Respect, Kindness, and Empathy:** We promise to listen to our friends, seeking to understand their feelings and treating them with kindness and love, just as we would wish for ourselves.
- **Talk and Share:** We promise to use our words to share our thoughts and ideas, valuing every voice and creating an inclusive space where everyone can freely express themselves.
- **Keep Stories:** In our group, what we talk about stays with us. We promise not to share anyone's private thoughts or stories without permission and avoid spreading rumors or gossip.
- **Inclusion and Non-discrimination:** Embracing the values of justice and pluralism, we promise to ensure everyone is included, celebrating our unique differences and rejecting all forms of discrimination. Love is the heart of our community, where we learn from and appreciate each other's diverse backgrounds and identities.
- **Learn and Grow:** Guided by the values of generosity and transformation, we promise to support each other's growth journey. We promise to learn from our mistakes, offering feedback with kindness and vulnerability, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.
- **Create Solutions Together:** In the spirit of interdependence and equity, we promise to work through disagreements collaboratively, listening and compromising to find solutions that respect everyone's needs and boundaries.
- **Safety and Care:** Valuing the well-being of each individual, we promise to prioritize mental, emotional, and physical safety, looking out for one another and providing a nurturing environment for growth. When we hear something that could harm someone or is about safety, a trusted grown-up will help make sure everyone can be safe again.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN WORSHIP SERVICES

Because children and youth are valued members of our community, we encourage their active participation in our worship gatherings. These guidelines are designed to help your family create a worship experience that accommodates the unique needs and abilities of children and youth while fostering a sense of community and spiritual growth.

Children of any age are welcome to attend worship service with their families. Worship is a sacred and powerful way to nurture our faith community and values. During the service, we provide busy bags with books and coloring activities in the Sanctuary foyer, along with an activity table and rug in the Sanctuary. Additionally, there is an extra play area in the Administration building if you wish to have your children remain in your care.

Here are some overarching guidelines to create an inclusive and enriching worship experience for all ages:

Welcoming Atmosphere:

- Create a warm and welcoming environment where children and youth feel valued and included.
- Encourage families to sit together for a sense of community.

Respectful Behavior:

- Emphasize the importance of respectful behavior during the service.
- Encourage minimal phone use to reduce distractions.

Active Engagement:

- Encourage your children and youth to actively engage in responsive readings, prayers, and singing.

Age-Appropriate Resources:

- Utilize age-appropriate resources and materials for children and youth to enhance their understanding and participation.

Reflect and Discuss:

- Foster post-service reflection and discussion to deepen your family's understanding and connection to the worship experience.

Affirming Children in Church:

- Use affirming statements to show appreciation for their presence.
- Avoid commenting on behavior but instead express gratitude for their participation.

Whispering in Church:

- Whispering can enrich the worship experience, not just correct behavior. You're encouraged to whisper to your kids to connect, share insights, encourage participation, and spark reflection!

Now, let's look at age-specific recommendations:

Little UU Toddlers (1- and 2- year-olds):

- Toddlers are naturally curious and active.
- Bring soft, quiet toys for comfort and engagement.
- Utilize dedicated spaces for quiet play.
- Feel free to take breaks outside the Sanctuary when needed.

Little UU Preschool Children (3-, 4-, and 5- year-olds):

- Arrive early to secure a good seat near the front for clear visibility.
- Understand that preschoolers have short attention spans and love to explore.
- Allow limited movement within the Sanctuary.
- Use provided busy bag books and drawing resources.
- Encourage simple participation and preparation for specific parts of the service.

Discovery Year Lower Elementary Children (6-, 7-, and 8- year-olds):

- Arrive early for a good view.
- These children have increased listening capacity and can participate.
- Utilize provided resources like busy bag books and drawing materials.
- Help them engage with readings and hymns.
- Encourage participation in simple ways.

Stepping Stones Upper Elementary Children (9-, 10-, and 11- year-olds):

- Actively engage in worship.
- Utilize resources like busy bag books.
- Encourage reading from materials.
- Model authentic participation.
- Encourage participation in songs, readings, stories, and chalice lightings.

YES-UU and YUUP Junior High and High School Teens:

- Sit together to foster community.
- Actively participate in responsive readings, prayers, and singing.
- Reflect on the service with age-appropriate materials.
- Encourage journaling or note-taking during the sermon.
- Engage in post-service discussions to express thoughts and opinions.
- Seek guidance and discuss spiritual questions with your available adults.
- Explore youth-focused programs and build a sense of belonging with peers.

Making a Home in Unitarian Universalism: A Guide for Families

We are all on a lifelong faith journey. What an adventure!

Unitarian Universalism is a living faith that embraces spiritual growth, healing, and transformation. As we invite you into starting or continuing this journey, we offer these ideas to help you settle in and thrive:

1. Engage with Open Hearts:

- **Worship with Purpose:** Participate in our worship services and engage with our traditions. Regular family attendance fosters a deeper understanding of Unitarian Universalism and sense of community. Sit close to the front or on the story rug.
- **Welcome each other:** Small gestures like hello, learning peoples names and faces (if you can!), sharing hymnals, and greeting new families can make a significant difference in making others feel welcome. As you become more comfortable, introduce yourself and engage in conversations, enriching the community fabric with your presence!
- **Share and Listen:** Embrace deep conversations and share your personal stories. By sharing your story, joys, and sorrows, you enrich our shared journey and bring us closer together. Asking for help, sharing our struggle enhances our faith community and helps us be a place you can come to get filled up.

2. Contribute with Helping Hands:

- **Volunteer:** Contribute to the congregation by volunteering in various capacities such as teaching in religious education programs, assisting youth, or engaging in community activities. Your active involvement fuels the community's growth and aligns with your family's vision for our shared faith.
- **Financial Support:** Understand the congregation's financial needs and guidelines for pledging. Pledge what you can joyfully give to sustain our faith and other families. Be an informed member, actively participating in congregational decisions and discussions.
- **Advocate the Mission:** Familiarize yourself with the congregation's mission and actively support its realization, both for your family and in the community at large. Ministry staff and leaders are here to accompany you and lift your family up on our shared journey.
- **Extend Your UU Values:** Take UU values into the world.

3. Embrace an Open Mind:

- **Learn About Our Promises:** Dive into understanding the values, covenant, and theology of Unitarian Universalism. It is a living tradition, which believes revelation is not sealed. We commit to learning and unlearning, spreading the good news of liberation.

- Explore UU History: Discover the rich history of Unitarian Universalism, featuring influential figures who have shaped our faith. You are now part of our legacy!
- Engage in Pluralism: When we share the traditions and stories of our backgrounds and beliefs, we can pass them onto our children and make a spiritual home for them!

By engaging with open hearts, contributing with helping hands, and embracing an open mind, you'll enrich your family's experience in our Unitarian Universalist community and build a spiritual home that resounds with our shared values! Welcome home!



LITTLE UUS

EARLY LEARNING NURSERY

Basics for Parents

Welcome to the Little Uu's Early Learning Nursery where we are creating new pathways and foundations for our little lives! Little Uu's offers a fun, nurturing, safe place for children to learn values and spiritual practices while experiencing a loving community. We do this through sacred stories, play, crafts, games, music, and more.

It is our goal of East Shore Unitarian Church of Bellevue to provide a safe, comfortable and nurturing environment for your child. We also want you to feel secure about your child's well-being while you attend services and activities. Grown-ups may stay with children in classes to help them feel more comfortable in their new surroundings and of course may drop in at any time.

- Children from infants up to and including age five are accepted for care in the nursery. Children above nursery age are typically not allowed in the nursery on Sunday mornings due to limited space.
- Nursery caregivers will not accept children that are ill. Please do not bring your child if they have been ill within the past 24 hours. Nursery volunteers will not give medication to children.
- There are always a minimum of two volunteers present. If a scheduled volunteer is sick, we may call upon parents or other qualified adults to fill in.
- It is common for children to cry when you leave. Normally, the children will calm down in just a few minutes. If your child continues to be upset for 10 minutes with no sign of calming down, we will call or text you.
- Children who are toilet trained will be allowed to go to the bathroom on their own. We do not provide bathroom assistance.
- Essentials bags (diapers, cups, clothing, etc.) can be left with the child.
- Children will only be released to a properly identified and preauthorized adult.

How to be a Drop-In Volunteer:

Sign up for Sundays this Fall at East Shore Unitarian Church from 10:30 AM to 11:45 AM. No prior experience is necessary; we'll provide training and materials. Caregivers are invited to join in this fun learning experience and help our lead instructor!

We can't wait to welcome you and share the beauty and warmth of Unitarian Universalism with your family!

Amanda Alice Uluhan
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DISCOVERY YEAR

Lower Elementary School Learning

Basics for Parents

Welcome to Discovery Year Lower Elementary where we are discovering how to create lasting connections!

In Lower Elementary, (Grades K-3) we offer small group learning environments to enrich and continue the faith development that adults experience in the worship service, only its presented in an age-appropriate way! There are interactive stories, song sharing circles, making lasting friendships, and small group experiences to help your children connect with a loving community.

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STEPPING STONES

Upper Elementary School Learning

Basics for Grown-ups

Welcome to Stepping Stones Upper Elementary where we are stepping into a greater sense of self!

In Upper Elementary, (Grades 4-6), we build on our foundations of Unitarian Universalist values with rich and creative learning environments. We focus on developing lasting friendships, articulating our values, and building community through developmentally appropriate small group experiences.

For fall quarter 2023, Stepping Stones will explore Micro:bit coding. Micro-Bits are small, programmable computers that open up a world of creative possibilities. In this program, we'll be teaching 4th, 5th, and 6th graders how to code, create games, and bring their ideas to life using Micro-Bits. It's an engaging and educational experience that's fun for both students and volunteers.

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How to be a Drop-In Volunteer:

Sign up for Sundays this Fall at East Shore Unitarian Church from 10:30 AM to 11:45 AM. No prior experience with Micro-Bits is necessary; we'll provide training and materials. Caregivers are invited to join in this fun learning experience and help our lead instructor!

Let's inspire the next generation of innovators together. Your presence and expertise can make a world of difference in a child's life. We can't wait to welcome you and share the beauty and warmth of Unitarian Universalism with your family!

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YES-UU: YOUTH EXPLORING SPIRITUALITY

Junior High Youth Programs

Basics for Parents

We are excited to share how our Unitarian Universalist (UU) community can make a positive impact on our youth. At UU, we believe in nurturing personal growth, fostering social engagement, and building a strong sense of identity for our young individuals. We do this by empowering youth to lead initiatives and projects, encouraging discussions that align with their interests, and providing mentorship programs that guide them in their personal, spiritual, and academic journeys. Our aim is to equip them with essential life skills, expose them to diverse perspectives through interfaith and inter-cultural dialogues, and involve them in meaningful community service and social justice projects. We also organize outdoor adventures for resilience and teamwork and offer platforms for artistic expression. Our community strives to create a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment where every youth feels heard, valued, and supported. Together, we build a future of confident, compassionate, and engaged leaders.

Additional Options for Engagement

Through the congregation, youth have the opportunity to pursue leadership, volunteering, and internship programs. We work with youth to explore their specific interests, where they can share their gifts, develop a greater sense of self, and build their capacity as young leaders. Such opportunities may include:

- Leading children's programs
- Leading elements of worship services, including music
- Video recording/editing
- Social and/or environmental justice

Youth may start at any time through the year and the schedule will be flexible and can be shaped around their school and other commitments. We can give youth confirmation of volunteer hours if needed for school and a reference for youth who successfully complete a program. We can't wait to welcome you and share the beauty and warmth of Unitarian Universalism with your family!

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YUUP: YOUNG UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PROJECT

High School Youth Programs

Basics for Parents

Welcome to our YUUP: Young Unitarian Universalist Project where High School Youth where youth are becoming who they want to be in the world! YUUP is a safe and encouraging place for high school students to meet, engage with their values, and contribute to the ESUC vision and mission of an awesome and inclusive community.

Through such programs as Coming of Age and Our Whole Lives, YUUP rotates curriculum with games, snacks, field trips and extracurricular events. Youth also have opportunities to attend UU youth events in the local area.

It is our goal of East Shore Unitarian Church of Bellevue to provide a safe, empowering, and supportive environment for youth. We support youth to plan and lead activities and have a developed youth mentorship model! You should feel confident about youth's well-being as their success is a top priority for us.

Additional Options for Engagement

Through the congregation, youth have the opportunity to pursue leadership, volunteering, and internship programs. We work with youth to explore their specific interests, where they can share their gifts, develop a greater sense of self, and build their capacity as young leaders. Such opportunities may include:

- Leading children's programs
- Leading elements of worship services, including music
- Video recording/editing
- Social and/or environmental justice

Youth can start at any time through the year and schedule around their school and other commitments. We confirm volunteer hours and provide a reference for youth who successfully complete a program. We can't wait to welcome you and share the beauty and warmth of Unitarian Universalism with your family!

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