

# *Religious Exploration*

## *For Children and Youth at*

### *South Valley Unitarian Universalist Society*

2019-2020  
Spring Info Packet

We are excited that our children and youth are joining us for the second half of our Religious Exploration (RE) year at South Valley Unitarian Universalist Society (SVUUS). Children and families are welcome to join us at any point in the RE year, our teachers will help your children catch up on where are in the material, and get to know the other children in their classes. As you spend more time in our community, we encourage regular RE attendance to get the most out of our classes!

If you registered your child for RE at SVUUS sometime between September 2019 and today, you do not have to register them again, and we're so happy you're here! If you haven't yet, do so at [tiny.cc/svuusre2019](https://tiny.cc/svuusre2019)

Contained in this packet is information about RE as a whole, the teams who are supporting your child's religious exploration, and are hopes and expectations for the year.

Please browse this packet prior to our first Traditional RE Sunday of 2020 (January 19th) or your child's first Sunday, and if you have any questions not addressed here, please feel free to reach out to me at [dre@svuus.org](mailto:dre@svuus.org)

Rebecca Britt  
Acting Director of Religious Exploration (Acting DRE)  
she/her/hers

*"Very early, I knew that the only object in life was to grow."*

Margaret Fuller

## Who We Are

South Valley Unitarian Universalist Society:

We are a community of hope for religious explorers who wish to transform our world into a more just, compassionate and sustainable place. We embrace diversity and provide opportunities for creativity, spiritual growth, and celebration of life.

Love is the spirit of this congregation, and our service to the world is love in action. We covenant to build a religious community that is guided by love, sustained by respectful relationships, and committed to action to make a better world. (Source: SVUUS website)

Acting Director of Religious Exploration:

Rebecca Britt began her role at SVUUS in July of 2019. She has experience leading education in diverse religious settings, and a background in social work. Her educational background in social work and sociology positions her to work with children and youth with a wide range of needs and strengths. She loves storytelling and writing. She works at SVUUS 30 hours a week, and typically works on Sundays, with one off per month, and Tuesday-Thursday, with other hours as scheduled. (Referred to as Acting DRE in policy and procedures)

RE Council:

Composed of both longtime and new teachers, and parents, the RE Council supports our program in many ways. The RE Council typically meets once a month to discuss overall and specific areas where we can grow, or are succeeding. The RE Council also sponsors special events that bring our families, and sometimes the entire congregation, together to share in the joy of religious exploration.

Teachers:

Our teachers are dedicated, caring and just plain fantastic. They are what makes our RE program special. Many of our teachers this year have taught RE here for many years, and others are joining us after a lifetime as participants in our RE program. All our teachers bring their unique perspectives and talents with them, and they are more than willing to welcome new members to the team.

Teachers lead 1 class a month, and support another. This commitment is said by many teachers to be their favorite way to participate in our community, and some join the team soon after becoming a member. For more information on how to jump in, contact Rebecca at [dre@svuus.org](mailto:dre@svuus.org)

## Curricula

Our curricula this year were chosen along two themes: Love and the many forms of faith. In many ways both these themes touch on all parts of our Unitarian Universalist faith, but in others

they are the most difficult to discuss and define. From our three year olds to high school seniors, RE participants will be working with their RE teachers to unwrap and explore these topics.

Your children may leave RE with more questions than answers, and that often means a huge amount of learning has happened. Here at SVUUS RE, we aren't afraid to be wrong or not know something, because we will learn as a team. Be ready to talk with your children about what they explored in RE on the trip home, and even throughout the week. We challenge our children to ask questions, be curious, and be willing to grow.

Please review the curricula that we are following this year below. Some of the children's curricula can be browsed online (<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children>), while the youth curricula is flexible and will grow as the class does.

#### Butterflies: 3-Pre-K\*

We Are Many, We Are One: Stories, games and projects encourage children to honor themselves, their religious community, nature and cultures from around the world. Features rich array of games, songs and family newsletters to build relationships between teachers and home. (Source: UUA)

Teachers: Erin Wilcox and Grace Burns (Open for more!)

\*3 year olds can join the Butterflies, or be in the nursery next door, depending on which is the most appropriate for their development and interest. Please feel free to consult with the Acting DRE, or our teachers if you aren't sure what is the best fit.

#### Pathfinders: Kindergarten-1st Grade

Love Surrounds Us: At the core of our Unitarian Universalist community are our seven Principles. The Principles encompass all the ingredients of a good and faith-filled life based on equality, freedom, peace, acceptance, truth, care, and love. This program explores all the Principles in the context of Beloved Community of family/home, school, neighborhood. Participants engage in activities that emphasize the love they feel in community. (Source: UUA)

Teachers: Julianne Best and Isabelle Burns (Open for more!)

#### Trailblazers: 2nd-3rd Grade

Love Will Guide Us: In this program, participants learn to seek guidance in life through the lens of our Unitarian Universalist Sources, with an emphasis on love. Together we ask questions such as, "Where did we come from?" "What is our relationship to the Earth and other

creatures?" "How can we respond with love, even in bad situations?" "What happens when you die?" Sessions apply wisdom from our Sources to help participants answer these questions. Participants will learn that asking questions is valued in Unitarian Universalism, even as they begin to shape their own answers. (Source: UUA)

Teachers: Shauni Roberts and Jordan Roberts (Open for more!)

Seekers: 4th-5th Grade

Love Connects Us: Love Connects Us celebrates important ways Unitarian Universalists live our faith in covenanted community. Moved by love and gathered in spirit, we embrace our responsibility toward one another and the world at large. We encourage one another's search for truth and meaning. We strive to be active in peace-making and other efforts to improve our world. (Source: UUA)

Teachers: Joanna Wald and Eric Wald (Open for more!)

Junior High (6th-8th Grade)

Our Neighboring Faiths: Drawing from the UUA Neighboring Faiths and Building Bridges curricula, this year is a favorite for many of our youth and bridged young adults. This year our JR high will explore the many faiths in our community (and even some beyond!) through discussion, research guest speakers and trips to houses of worship in our community. We will start the semester with classes at SVUUS establishing our group and what they are interested in. Then, a schedule will be sent out indicating when we are visiting other faiths--a great week for you to join the class!

Teachers: Brenda Thomas, Kristen May and Ryan Thomas (Open for more!)

High School (9th-12th Grade)

Modern Faith: A brand new curriculum developed by the RE youth team, based our youth's interests. Modern Faith is an evolving exploration on what faith means in our times. High school youth will learn from guest speakers, small group discussion and activities about other religions, current affairs, and what faith and social justice looks like in an age of social media. Some Sundays we will meet at Beans and Brew, instead of SVUUS (a schedule will be sent out) or remain upstairs for the service, followed by a discussion with Rev Karen. Sources will include UUA curricula, current events and the youth themselves.

Teachers: Lorelei White and Peggy Montrone (Open for more!)

## Our Policies and Procedures

Religious Exploration time on Sundays begins following the Time for All Ages. During the time for ages, someone (often the Rebecca, but not always) tells a story or leads an activity, and following that, our children and youth head downstairs with their teachers. RE time runs until 12:00. If the service ends before this, please enjoy fellowship in our social hall until the classes are finished. If you will need to leave with your child before this, please let a teacher or the Rebecca know.

We welcome all children and youth to join us, even if it is their first time here. We do ask that adults who bring the children and youth come downstairs with them the first time, to meet their teachers and register them, providing necessary information that may be needed.

We follow the rule of three, and strive to always have two adults in the room with children and youth of all ages. While we are glad our children feel comfortable here, this is an important rule to follow for many safety reasons.

Before and after class, children are the responsibility of the adult who brought them to SVUUS that week. We love spending time with all our children and youth, and will do all we can to make sure they are safe when we are with them, while acknowledging that our role changes when RE time ends. Youth are welcome to go find the adult they came with, while we ask that adults meet our Pre-K through 5th grade children at their classrooms at 12:00.

Inclusion is a priority. We welcome children and acknowledge their various experiences, abilities, strengths, growth areas and needs. No child or youth will be excluded from our programming due to their gender-identity, race or ethnicity, ability, nationality, citizenship status, sexuality, socio-economic status or religious beliefs.

We use positive behavior guidance to help children have the most positive experience and participate in programming as fully as they can. Our teachers have been trained in providing options, and addressing challenging behaviors as an opportunity to grow. It is against our policy to use time outs, or any method of addressing behavior that involves physical correction. Please notify the class RE team and the Acting DRE of existing behavior plans that we can support, within this framework.

If behavior becomes a significant disruption to any child's ability to participate in the program, it will be directly addressed, with family involvement as needed, by the teachers, with the Acting DRE or Youth Coordinator, or in a private meeting as the situation calls for it.

If you have a concern about your child's experience in their class, please do not hesitate to reach out to Rebecca or your child's teacher. While discomfort often comes with growth, we want this to be an overall positive experience. There is often a lot going on Sunday, and email is the best way to make sure non-urgent concerns are heard. If you reach out to a teacher first, please understand that Rebecca may consult and be involved as needed.

If you have a concern about Rebecca and are not comfortable coming to her, reach out to the minister ([minister@svuus.org](mailto:minister@svuus.org)) or the board president (In the 2019-2020 church year: [ann.scarborough@svuus.org](mailto:ann.scarborough@svuus.org) )

### Expectations of Our Families

Recognize that Religious Exploration happens all week long. Invite opportunities to build onto what your child learns on Sunday morning, and help your child explore possible answers to questions that come up after we say goodbye.

Participate in the program. We are collaborative program, and can only succeed with the involvement of our families. Reach out to the Acting DRE or talk to your child's teacher about how you want to get involved.

Please share anything that will impact your child's safety (Allergies, significant behavior concerns, people who cannot pick up, etc) on your child's registration form. Communicating this to teachers is important, but as teaching teams may vary a bit week to week, and it is important that the information be consistently available. If this information changes or was not initially included, reach out to the Acting DRE at [dre@svuus.org](mailto:dre@svuus.org)

### Expectations of Our Children and Youth

Follow the covenant developed in your class on the first day. It will be displayed, and always feel welcome to ask your teachers if you need help understanding what is expected.

If you need help, ask for it. Your teachers want you to have a good experience, and will help you however they can.

Be respectful of everyone in your class, children and teachers. It is okay to not always get along, but it is important to follow our values and respect the dignity of each person. Including yourself!

Have fun!

*Updates to these policies and procedures will be made available semesterly, or as updated.*

## Spring Schedule

Intergen: Intergenerational Service during which members of all ages stay upstairs for a unique service meant for people of all ages

Traditional RE: Age grouped classes (Preschool-Pre-K, K-1 (Sometimes moves up or down!), 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-12) with developmentally appropriate exploration based in different themes

Children's Chapel: Worship service designed especially for elementary aged children with music, games and new experiences.

January:

5th: Winter RE Choices

12th: Identity Service: Intergen

19th: Traditional RE

26th: Traditional RE K Stuff: High School

February:

2nd: Traditional RE

9th: Children's Chapel: Preschool-5th Grade

16th: Questions Service: Intergen

23rd: Traditional RE

March:

1st: Traditional RE

8th: Children's Chapel: Preschool-5th Grade

15th: TBD Theme, Intergen

22nd: Traditional RE

29th: Traditional RE, K Stuff: High School

April:

5th: Traditional RE

12th: Easter Sunday Service: Intergen

19th: Children's Chapel: Preschool-5th Grade

26th: Traditional RE, K Stuff: High School

May:

3rd: Traditional RE

10th: Traditional RE

17th: Flower Ceremony: Intergen & Annual Meeting following service

24th: Bridging Ceremony (Youth Led Service): Intergeren  
31st: RE & Dedication Recognition: Intergeren  
SVUUS Picnic and Intergeren Soccer Game

Any changes to schedule will be made available as soon as possible.

Youth Special Events schedule will be communicated by teachers with notice