

A Prayer for Our Children



With open hearts and minds we allow the power and presence within to guide our thoughts, inspire our dreams and move us into action.

We recognize what precious gifts our children, youth and families are and know that they brighten the world with their faith and love.

We provide a safe and nurturing environment that allows that faith and love to unfold.

We draw to us all the resources, people and ideas needed to bring this idea into manifestation. We acknowledge God as our source and know that in co-creating we bring these ministries into being.

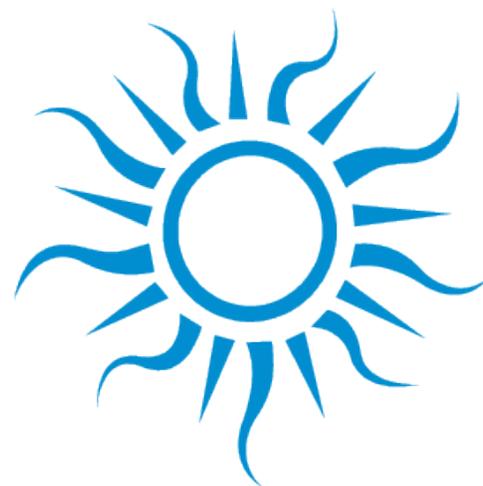
For it is through the wonder and power of God that all things exist.

We give thanks that the way before us is bathed in light and we step forward in faith knowing that through the power and presence of Jesus, the Christ, our way is made clear.

“Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs.’”

Matt 19:14

Unity Northwest Church



Youth & Family Ministry Parent Handbook

**259 E. Central Road
Des Plaines, IL 60016**

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Welcome to Unity Northwest Church's Youth & Family Ministry

A place to let your divine light shine!

Youth Minister
Reverend Diane Venzera, CSE, LUT

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Many blessings and we look forward to seeing you each week.

Rev. Diane Venzera

Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to get involved in their children's spiritual education. Handouts and materials are available to help the learning continue at home.

Spiritual Educator Training

Training for our teachers, leaders, sponsors and assistants are held regularly.

They include:

Church Based

Quarterly Youth Ministry team gatherings where we come together to get to know one another and to explore different parts of our lesson experiences.

Local Area (Subregion)

Our leadership team participates in the are youth director's quarterly meeting.

Regional

Unity Northwest is part of the Unity Great Lakes Region. Our regional consultants offer trainings throughout the year.

National

Spirit's Light Foundation offers a yearly spiritual educator's conference in the Chicago area.

Child/Teen Week, The Association of Unity Churches, Int'l offers a week of spiritual education classes during the summer. It is usually held in the Kansas City, MO area.

Lesson Structure

Sacred Circle: This is a time of community building, prayer, music, reconnecting, and meditation. A love offering is also accepted in order to help the students understand the circle of giving and receiving.

Lesson Content: An experience that is used to create common ground among the students. It involves relating a truth teaching to life through the use of story, poem, music, video clip or a life experience. The presentation is geared to stimulate individual thought and group discussion.

Discussion: After the common experience is created the teachers use the *Living Curriculum* questioning strategy that engages the learner in an exploration of the story and how it reflects Unity principle and relates to their life.

Creative Experience: The students are then invited into creative experiences that provide an experiential understanding of the lesson principle. They participate in activities that include, art, music games, creative movement, and discussion. The open-ended activities are designed to invite the students to explore what the ideas shared mean to them personally.

Sharing: The lesson experience closes with a summary of the lesson's focus. During this time individuals can share the insights that have been gained during their time together. The closing is brief and is a meaningful part of the day's activities.

Closing: All classes join the adults in the Sunday service for closing celebrations. The Uniteens and Y.O.U.ers are dismissed from the sanctuary and the children 3 to 10 are taken back to their classrooms where their parents sign them out and pick them up.

Who We Are

As a spiritual youth community, we provide a safe place of love and acceptance where our children and teens experience the recognition of their oneness with God.

Our purpose is to create programs and experiences that invite the Divine potential in each individual to grow and expand. Using the tools of affirmative prayer, Living Curriculum, meditation and service, we practice Unity Truth principles as a way of life.

What We Believe

Unity's 5 Basic Principles

1. There is only one power and one presence in the universe, God, who is all good and active in everything, everywhere.
2. I am naturally good because God*s divinity is in me and in everyone.
3. I create my experiences by what I choose to think and what I feel and believe.
4. Through affirmative prayer and meditation I connect with God and bring out the good in my life.
5. I do and give my best by living the Truth I know. I make a difference.

Sacred Safety

Our teachers, leaders, sponsors and assistants are all background screened and trained in the "Living Curriculum Philosophy."

Program Overview

A Living Curriculum Focus

The vision of, A Living Curriculum, is to empower children and youth to use their spiritual wisdom to fulfill their soul's purpose; to empower parents to see themselves as the primary spiritual educators of their children and youth; to empower facilitators to see education as a process, through which they effectively support the unfolding of the child's spiritual nature and model the living of the spiritual principles; to empower a spiritual community to function with unity in diversity; to inspire a world educational community by its philosophy, process, programs and products. (Association of Unity Churches, Int'l)

Registration

Spiritual Education classes are available for children 0 to 18 years old during the 11:00 am Service only.

Registration forms are required for each student. They can be found on the sign-in table just outside the classrooms.

Arrival

To ensure the maximum safety for the children, a parent/guardian is required to sign the child into the classroom with the same person signing them out immediately following the service.

Please try to drop children off by 11:00 am because:

- We are able to greet each child
- They are able to take advantage of the pre-session activities.
- They are able to join us at the beginning of the experience rather than walking in after we are already started.
- Some children find it difficult to walk into an activity that is already in progress and may not feel a part of the group.

Y.O.U.

High School - Ages 14 to 18

Teens are going through rapid changes and continued growth spurts. They face a lot of temptations and constant peer pressure. They spend a great deal of time worrying about how others view them. They are beginning to want to be treated as adults. They have the ability to think through problems on their own and want to be respected for who they are. Their emotions are often mixed, sometimes feeling like an adult and ready to assume more responsibility and sometimes feeling like they can't handle anything.

Generally they...

- Alternate between moments of brilliance and moments of "what were you thinking?"
- Need adults who will help them think through choices for their lives and to affirmation that their dreams for their lives are possible.
- Want to be respected for who they are no matter what that appears to be and want their opinions to matter.
- Want to spend time with their friends
- Need the opportunity to explore how they personally feel about what they study in class
- Are able to engage in abstract thinking and discussion
- Have their own ideas about spirituality
- Are interested in exploring ideas and beliefs outside their own.

Curriculum Focus for this Age Group

- To be receptive to the idea that God is a mental attitude that works in and through us.
- To understand that they are the creator of their own world through the thoughts they give power to and what they choose to see and believe.
- To gain the ability to look past the literal appearance of a situation and to focus on the good the situation brings.
- To know that the Kingdom of God is within them.
- To know that each has the power to live and do and Jesus did.

Uniteens

Middle School - Ages 11 to 13

Preteens are going through huge physical and emotional changes. They can be unpredictable and hard to read as they swing between childhood and adulthood. They are making an attempt to move into adulthood but can still be drawn to things in their childhood. Preteens are excited to be moving into the teen years but also scared of the unknown. They are exploring who they are and their peers are very important to them.

Generally they...

- Need experiences and activities that give them the opportunity to interact with their peers.
- Need rituals that help them to mark turning points in their lives.
- Need opportunities to take on major responsibilities in the classroom.
- Need to be with adults who are compassionate with all they are going through yet able to give loving guidance.
- Are very concerned with their appearance and where they fit into the group. They need to feel a sense of belonging.
- Are capable of self-awareness, insight and empathy.
- Like to focus on things they think are important and tend to be careless with things that they think are unimportant like cleaning their room.
- Are impulsive and don't yet have the full capacity to think things through in detail.
- Need a lot of physical exercise
- Developing an interest in social justice and fairness
- Able to enjoy abstract thinking and like to explore many sides of an issue.

Curriculum Focus for this Age Group

- To understand that Jesus was a human being who lived and is also the example of God moving in and through us.
- To know they are inherently good and they have choices as how they can show up in this world.
- To begin to understand that Jesus is our elder brother and way-shower.

Departure

All classes end with the children & teens joining the adults in the sanctuary. As soon as the closing song is complete the children (ages 3 to 10) are returned to their classrooms.

Please sign your child out as soon as the service has ended.

Toys

Please leave toys at home or in the car. Our children are busy with the day's spiritual exploration and toys distract them from the program and group building experiences of the class.

Attire

Please dress children in clothing that they are comfortable in. Please note that, while every precaution is taken, we sometimes do activities that may soil their clothing.

Please dress preschool children that make trips to the bathroom easy for them.

Recuperation Policy

If children are working through a health challenge, he/she will have difficulty participating in class and need the caring attention and healing atmosphere of their home.

Health challenges include the symptoms of fever, diarrhea, vomiting, rashes, and/or eye infections.

*There are two ways of spreading light;
Be the Candle or the mirror that reflects it.*

Class Groupings

Wees Ones & Unitots

Ages 0 to 2 & 3 to 5

Young children are noticing more about the world around them and their place in it. They are full of curiosity and questions and are developing the capacity to respond in a loving way to others and to take responsibility for their actions.

Generally they...

- Need adults to model appropriate behavior
- Need consistent rules; responds to clear and simple expectations
- Are still awkward with writing and small, detailed activities
- Love to have stories read to them
- Love to help out in the classroom
- Like a lot of physical activity
- Need to move frequently from one activity to another; short attention span
- Soak up information with incredible speed
- Think very literally
- Learn best by playing, exploring, role play

Curriculum Focus for this Age Group

- To help the children understand that they are loved just as they are.
- To explore Jesus as a human being and as a model of love and goodness.
- To help the children understand that they, too, have the spiritual potential to act in ways that bring out their best selves.
- To help the children develop their spiritual potential to express love and caring for others.

Elementary

Ages 6 to 10

These students are energetic, curious, open imaginative, and enthusiastic. They are learning what it means to be in relationship with each other. They still need adult help and reassurance but also need time on their own to explore new ideas and concepts. They are developing the ability to talk about and explain their ideas.

Generally they...

- Have growth and development of their small motor skills so writing is becoming easier
- Can listen well but may not always remember what they heard. Repetition is important.
- Can have a tendency to choose things that are too hard and then may give up
- Can be insecure about their abilities so may not jump right into a new project
- Love new ideas and asking questions
- Learn well through games, hand-on activities and exploring how things work

Curriculum Focus for this Age Group

- To see Jesus as a person who had challenges and difficulties but created a relationship with God that helped him to move through these challenges with loving kindness and generosity.
- To use who Jesus was and how he behaved to create a model of behavior for their own lives.
- To help the children explore how they, too, can let God live through them as an expression of life, love and kindness.