

### **Vision Statement**

*To nurture and support the growth of children's spiritual identity using UU Principles and Sources, and to empower the children to lead ethical and moral lives within the congregation and larger community*

Our goal is to create a welcoming, trusting community in which your child will be nurtured spiritually, stretched mentally and supported emotionally.

We want our children to grow in their understanding of themselves and their world.

Our challenge is to empower children to take responsibility for their actions and moral and ethical decisions.

### **Welcome to Children's Religious Education**

Welcome to the Religious Education Program at The Unitarian Church in Summit. We are a liberal religious community and our goal is to foster the lifelong spiritual growth of all individuals.

The program of religious education is determined, as are all other programs, by members of our congregation. A wide range of courses is available through the Unitarian Universalist Association. These are adapted to fit with our goals and mission. We combine material from various age-appropriate curricula so that most children are exposed to four major areas of study: Unitarian Universalism, Jewish-Christian heritage, world religions, and peace and social justice.

Courses appropriate for children range in themes as varied as interpersonal relations, ethical questions, the Bible, world religions, nature and ecology, heroes and heroines of social reform, Unitarian Universalist history, and holy days around the world. In our congregation, regular children's worship is held during a portion of the adult service. We seek to teach our children to be responsible for their own thinking and to nurture their own impulses of reverence, morality, respect for others, and themselves.

## Unitarian Principles and Purposes in Language for Children

The Unitarian Universalist Association has enunciated seven key principles of Unitarian Universalism, which you can read in the Unitarian Universalist section of this website. Here is one way we express these same principles in simpler language for our younger members:

### The Foundation

"The foundation of our religion does not rest upon miracles nor do we believe in Truth as something revealed in its fullness to anyone in times past. To us, Life and the universe in which life flourishes are miracles enough. Growing insights are the only revelations on which we count. We glory in our children's curiosities and in their open-minded inquiries." – **Sophia Fahs**

### It matters What We Believe

The following words were written by Sophia Fahs, 1876-1978, a noted Unitarian-Universalist religious educator and author

Some beliefs are like walled gardens. They encourage exclusiveness

and the feeling of being especially privileged. Other beliefs are expansive and lead the way to wider and deeper sympathies.

Some beliefs are like shadows, darkening children's days

Every person is important and valuable

All people should be treated fairly

Our churches are places where we should accept one another and learn together

Each person is free to search for what is true and right

All people have a right to speak out and vote on things that matter to them

We should build a peaceful, fair and free world

We need to take care of the Earth, the home we share with all living things

with fears of unknown calamities. Other beliefs are like sunshine, blessing children with the warmth of happiness.

Some beliefs are divisive, separating the saved from the unsaved, friends from enemies.

Other beliefs are bonds in universal brotherhood, where sincere differences beautify the pattern.

Some beliefs are like blinders, shutting off the power to choose one's own direction.

Other beliefs nurture self-confidence and enrich the feeling of personal worth.

Some beliefs are rigid, like the body of death, impotent in a changing world. Other beliefs are pliable, like the young sapling, ever growing with the upward thrust of life.

It is indeed important what mankind has believed.

It is important what we believe.

And what a child believes is also a serious matter – not a subject for jest or sentimentality.

Instead of helping children...to think about 'religious things' we need to learn how to help children to think about ordinary things until insights and feelings are found which have a religious quality. And what is this religious quality or way of understanding? The religious way is the deep way, the way of growing perspective and expanding view. It is the way that dips into the heart of things, into personal feelings, yearnings and hostilities that so often must be buried and despised and left misunderstood. The religious way is the way that sees what physical eyes alone fail to see, the intangibles of the heart of every phenomenon. The religious way is the way that touches universal relationships; that goes high, wide and deep, that expands the feelings of kinship. And if God symbolizes or means those larger relationships, the religious way means finding God; but the world in itself is not too important. It is enlarged and deepening experiences that bring the growing insights and that create the sustaining ambition to 'find life and to find it abundantly' that really count most. When such a religious quality of exploration is the goal, any subject, any phenomenon, anything, animate or inanimate human or animal, may be the starting point."

Sophia Fahs, Religious Educator, 1876-1978