



The First Unitarian Church of Honolulu
Religious Exploration Programs
for Children and Youth
Fall 2007



Religious Education Mission Statement:

Together we explore the meaning of human experience,
drawing from a wide variety of religious and philosophical teachings.
Our goal is to inspire participants to make thoughtful decisions
regarding what to believe and how to live. 11/01

From Nan Kleiber, Director of Religious Explorations:

Welcome to UU Religious Education and Exploration. I've been thinking lately about why it is we DO Religious Education/Exploration at this church. To keep children and youth busy during the Sunday morning service? Yes! To give ourselves experiences with the ideas and values of religious traditions, our own and others? Yes! And how do we know if we meet our goals? The following essay, by Bipsy Rian, shows some of the possibilities. Bipsy participated in our programs, RE, Coming of Age, Our Whole Lives, and also helped with child care on Sunday mornings. She wrote this essay as part of her application to Chapman University, which she will attend this fall.

It was a rainy, gray day when I lost my faith in God. I was sitting in a corner of my grandmother's armchair, crying because my cat died. He was orange and stripy, with a bottlebrush tail, and his name was Star. My grandmother sat down next to me and patted my head. She asked why I was crying, so I told her Star had died and asked if I'd meet him in Heaven when I got there.

'No, dear, you won't, because animals don't have souls, so they can't go to Heaven,' she said matter-of-factly. I guess her idea of Heaven was the usual: clouds and golden harps and pure, good people sitting around in pure, white robes. I stopped crying and looked at her. Her solution to every problem was to pray, and it would all be okay because God would take care of it. But what was I supposed to say to Him if He wouldn't allow Star into Heaven? What kind of God could take away my cat and not let him into Heaven?

Faith is easy for some people, a thing they follow blindly with their hearts and never question. For others, it's more complicated. For them there are questions that have no easy answers. For a little girl who would never see her cat again, even in Heaven, it was too much. I wiped away the last of my tears and got out of the chair. I decided I didn't need to believe in God if He wouldn't let my cat into Heaven.

I find it strange that some people hate the idea of God and refuse to accept other people's beliefs. Strange, too, that there are people who believe so firmly in God that they think anyone who doesn't will burn in Hell. I was neither of these, I was simply confused. I didn't know what to believe.

Then, when I was seventeen I got on a plane by myself for the first time in my life. I flew halfway across the world and I should have been terrified. But I knew exactly where I was going. I thought about the money my

mother had saved for years to pay for this and the days I spend painting Raphael angels in cramped studios. In seventh grade, we studied Italy and Renaissance artists, and I could think of nothing but the Sistine Chapel for years afterward. I dreamed of angels and saints, tiny cobbled streets and fields of grapevines.

The other American kids stared and pointed at me when I kissed the ground in the airport. But I didn't care because I was there. I was in Italy.

A week later, I stood before Michelangelo's Pieta and looked at Mary's face for what seemed like hours. She held her son in her arms and her face showed the simplest, purest pain. She lived him. She loved him with every fiber of her being. It was hard to believe a simple, human man carved that with his hands. I walked on a bridge of angels and touched their powerful wings. I saw the ceiling of my beloved Sistine Chapel and started to cry for the first time in years. An Italian man asked me what was wrong. I told him it was so beautiful it hurt my eyes.

'I think it's maybe your heart that hurts,' he said quietly. I knelt on the floor of the Sistine Chapel, looking through my tears at God. Two tourists walked past me, their cameras hidden beneath their jackets, stealing memories of the ceiling. They saw God in the cracked image above them, giving Adam life with the tip of his finger. I saw God in the making of the ceiling and in the faces of the silent people around me.

The next day I found the field of sunflowers. I stood between flowers as tall as I was and felt their soft yellow petals. They stretched for miles, across fields and hills. A single ray of sun beamed across the field, and I believed in Heaven again as I walked among the sunflowers.

The man who painted the Sistine Chapel had to believe in something higher than himself to create beauty that powerful. How could people build and paint churches, or sculpt wings for angels if they had nothing to believe in, if they thought it was only them in the world and nothing beyond that? I have faith in love and the tiny people who walk the earth beneath an endless sky. I believe that they have the power to help each other and love each other and keep each other alive. I believe in love. But I don't think people could do some of the things they do without believing in something more powerful than themselves. What that is, they can decide for themselves.

And my Heaven isn't a place where cats aren't allowed, or where everyone plays harps and wears white robes. When I go to Heaven, the ceiling will be painted gold and the angels will stand guard on bridges and sunflowers will cover the earth. The sea will be turquoise and the sky pink. The Red Hot Chili Peppers will play in the background. And an orange, striped cat will be there waiting for me, curled up in a corner with his tail wrapped around him.

People are so small, so seemingly powerless compared to the size of the universe. I didn't 'find God' the way you usually hear about people discovering the Lord. I didn't read the Bible or pray on bended knee. I walked in a sunflower field, cried in a church and lost the power to breathe, let alone speak, because of what I saw before me. Even now, I can't put into words what I felt then. Small, I guess, because I realized, after years of confusion, that it was simple: There are things around us that we can't explain. And I don't need to explain whatever higher power I felt. Realizing it was there is enough for me.

Everyone teaches, everyone learns, everyone grows.

[Edmonds UU Church]

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE:

The service begins at 10:15. Families sit together during the first part of the service, and then children and youth proceed to their own programs. Please come together and stay together for this part of the morning program. Parents are welcome to join their children upstairs for the religious explorations programs. Upstairs, children in Pre K and Kindergarten join those in Lower and Upper Elementary classes and the Youth Group for the Opening Circle in Room #1.

Children's Closing Circle: At 11:45, we gather in Room #1 again, to celebrate our morning, and share what we have been learning/doing. Parents and other adults are strongly encouraged to join us for the Closing Circle.

INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Room #6 10:10 to noon.

Our youngest participants, from birth up to three years old, have a safe, pleasant environment while parents participate in the Sunday morning program. Our trained nursery staff and volunteers play with, read and sing to, watch, change and feed babies and toddlers. Parents are welcome to join their children for this program. Care is provided by Phyllis Keohohou and others who have worked with us for several years now, and by volunteers. Parents, be sure to collect your children by noon, so that our child care staff may complete their work.

PRE KINDERGARTEN and KINDERGARTEN

Room #5

Three, four and five-year-olds will be with Sylvia Himeda and parent volunteers, learning from a UU curriculum, learning about themselves, their church and Unitarian Universalism.

This Fall our Elementary Classes will be learning about ISLAM. It is extremely important that as citizens of the United States, we all have a good understanding of the beliefs, traditions and cultures of the Islamic world. This is an opportunity for children, and families, to explore aspects of Islam, and how these relate to our own religious tradition, Unitarian Universalism. Traditionally, UUs share with Muslims a monotheistic view of God/Allah. How does this work?

FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD GRADE

Room #3

Teaching team members are Charles Asselbaye and Kris Newmann, plus others still to be recruited, assisted by Ian Valasek.

THIRD, FOURTH, FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADE

Room #1.

Teachers are Gene and Shirley Parola, Wilma Oksendahl and Martha Spengler, assisted by Zach Fraser.

YOUTH GROUP [7th through 12th Grade].

Room #2.

Nan Kleiber will be the Youth Group Advisor through the fall. We will be using clips from films which involve various ethical and theological issues as the basis for discussion on the First and Third Sunday of each month. Spaghetti Lunch on the 4th Sunday, and service projects, field trips, or something else PLANNED BY THE YOUTH on the Second Sunday of each month. Members of the group will be obtaining the films, organizing the snacks, developing the openings and closings for the group, and planning events. Youth will attend the first part of the Sunday service, and the RE Opening, and THEN proceed to their program.

The First Unitarian Church of Honolulu
Religious Exploration Program
Registration for Children and Youth
Fall, 2007

Name of Child _____ Birth date [month, day, year] _____ Grade [Fall, 2007] _____

Parent(s) with whom the child(ren) live:

Name(s) _____ Home Phone _____

Address: _____ Cell Phone _____

_____ ZIP _____ - _____ E-mail _____

****Are there personal concerns that you would like us to know about? Please attach explanation.**

**** Does your child have dietary restrictions or food allergies? Please attach details.**

Church members? Yes No Have you made a financial commitment to the church? Yes No

**If you DO not contribute financially, please include at least \$75 to register your child[ren].
Checks to The First Unitarian Church of Honolulu. Thank you!**

Approximately how often will your child(ren) attend the Religious Education Program? [Please circle one of the following. It helps plan programs and supplies.]

Every week Twice a month Once a month Special programs only

The Religious Education Program is a cooperative program staffed by volunteers. We expect ALL parents to participate. Please choose one or more of the following ways to help.

Be a classroom helper Teach on a team Assist with holiday programs

Help with arts and crafts Help with music Help with field trips

May we use your child's photo and first name [only] for displays and on the church website? Yes No If you don't indicate a preference, we will assume it's okay to use them.

Parent signature: _____ Date _____

Please return this form to Nan Kleiber, at the Church! Mahalo!
PLEASE INCLUDE A RECENT PHOTO OF YOUR FAMILY, FOR OUR PHOTO
DIRECTORY! We'd be glad to take one, if you don't have one available.