

AUUF RE LONG RANGE PLAN FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH
Completed by RE LRP Committee 9/19/06
Endorsed by AUUF Board 10/8/06

I. Mission. Create a Mission Statement for the AUUF Religious Education program.

Rationale: A mission statement for the RE program will provide AUUF, especially those working directly with the program, a sense of solidarity, purpose, and common ground (*Churchworks*). It will also provide the RE LRP committee with a vision while developing the RE Long Range Plan. The RE LRP committee used the results of an email survey to the Fellowship from May 2004 and a content analysis of the data collected from 51 AUUF members and friends who completed the September, 2004 “RE: It Takes a Village-A Discussion Activity,” as well as the personal teaching and RE committee chair experiences of its members, to develop the mission statement. The committee views the approval of the RE Mission Statement by the Fellowship as an important step in the successful development and implementation of the RE Long Range Plan. The RE LRP Committee submitted a proposal to AUUF Board requesting the AUUF RE Mission Statement be placed on the ballot for the 2006 annual meeting of the Fellowship. The Board approved and the RE Mission Statement for Children and Youth was unanimously accepted by the Fellowship on June 4, 2006.

AUUF Religious Education Mission Statement for Children and Youth. The Religious Education Program of the AUUF is dedicated to fostering a sense of wholeness in our children and youth and enriching their spiritual lives as they explore faith traditions and religious and ethical questions within a supportive UU community. Guided by the AUUF Mission Statement and the UUA principles, and leading by example, those involved with the RE program empower young people to respect the inherent worth and dignity of themselves and others, search for individual spiritual meaning, make responsible decisions, and understand what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist in a world of religious diversity. We strengthen the bonds between AUUF young people and adults, and help our children and youth understand the importance of working with the larger community to care for the earth and to bring about a safe and just world.

II. Program Goals. Develop RE Program goals that are congruent with the RE Mission Statement and that will provide long-term guidance for curriculum and program development.

Rationale: RE Program goals will help maintain the focus and continuity of the RE program. The purpose of the RE Program Goals is to provide a concrete plan for fulfilling the mission of the RE Program.

Objectives/Strategies

- a. A committee should be appointed to develop the RE Program goals.
- b. Goals should reflect the mission statements of the AUUF and the RE Program.
- c. In the appendix to the *Supporting Material for the AUUF RE Long Range Plan* are ideas that emerged during the RE LRP deliberations that may be useful for the committee appointed to develop the RE Program Goals.

III. Relationship with AUUF Community. Foster a strong connection between the AUUF Religious Education Program and the AUUF community as a whole.

Rationale: Since the success of the RE program for children and youth is dependent on the time, energy, and financial resources of AUUF adults, it is important to keep AUUF members and friends informed about the RE program. Furthermore, the more involved parents and non-parents are with the RE children and their activities, the more likely they are to form a strong personal connection with the RE program.

Objectives/Strategies:

- a. Encourage all AUUF adults to accept ownership of the RE program through a commitment of time, energy, and resources.
- b. Remind adults in the Fellowship that we are all role models for the children and youth in all our activities.
- c. Keep AUUF adults informed about RE activities
 - (1) Continue providing the RE service and art show
 - (2) Continue Newsletter articles and other creative presentations of the activities of the RE Program
 - (3) Continue Teacher Dedication Ceremony and Teacher Appreciation activities at the beginning and end of the year.
 - (4) Create new ways to fulfill this objective.
- d. Utilize Valentine Express or a similar activity as a community-building, fund-raising, outreach-focused activity for children, youth, and adults.
- e. Develop AUUF projects that encourage inter-generational friendship where students and adult members partner to complete a task (i.e. gathering information/opinions for surveys on various subjects, building/making things such as bird houses, knitted squares for a blanket, planting a garden), etc.

IV. Fellowship Life. Integrate youth and children into Fellowship Life.

Rationale: As they mature we hope our children will incorporate Unitarian Universalist principles and values seamlessly into their lives. Therefore, from the very beginning we want them to feel they are an important, integral part of this Fellowship's ongoing life.

Objectives/Strategies:

- a. Work through Council to encourage Committee Chairs to invite youth and children to serve on committees or to help with short term projects.
- b. Invite and encourage children and youth to participate in Fellowship activities such as sing in the choir, join work parties, take part in Sunday Services and other Fellowship activities.
- c. Encourage children and youth to help with the planning of some events that involve interaction of adults and children.
- d. Incorporate more intergenerational services and activities into the Fellowship calendar with children and youth involved in planning them.

- e. Develop ways for students to participate in the life and governance of the Fellowship. These might include initiating experiments with teen “angels” paired with the regular “kitchen angels,” inviting teens to serve as story readers, inviting students to bring their own potluck dishes, creating a board position for a student representative, designating a portion of the grounds or a garden to RE student care and maintenance, among other possibilities.
- f. Encourage children and youth to submit to the newsletter activities and accomplishments that reflect UU values

V. Youth. Address the opportunities and needs unique to youth age 13 through 19.

Rationale: A strong and positive UU youth experience benefits the youth, enriches the Fellowship and fosters a lifelong UU identity and commitment. The Mid-South District and UUA have opportunities for youth separate from younger children and it is important to support our youth in these activities.

Objectives/Strategies:

- a. Support our youth and visiting UU youth groups in activities.
- b. Make a commitment to help our youth participate in regional and national UU gatherings and conferences.
- c. Encourage and facilitate AUUF youth and adult leadership in MSD Youth Adult Council (YAC) activities.
- d. Implement support programs including but not limited to Our Whole Lives (OWL), Coming of Age (COA), and Rites of Passage.
- e. Work with membership committee to develop an orientation program to inform youth about the opportunities and responsibilities of joining the AUUF.
- f. Integrate youth into the decision-making process when planning and developing RE programs.
- g. Create social activities where youth can develop social connections and enjoy coming together.
- h. Encourage and facilitate youth participation in Sunday programs and services on a meaningful level so that they can develop an understanding of the structure and rituals used each week at AUUF.

VI. Professional Staff. Hire a DRE who is committed to fulfilling the mission of the AUUF Religious Education program.

Rationale: The AUUF RE program waxes and wanes depending on the amount of volunteer hours the RE chair is able to offer to the position. In many churches, UU and otherwise, the two positions that are most common are minister and religious education director. Building a consistent and smoothly functioning RE program requires time each week far beyond the scope of most other AUUF volunteer commitments. In truth, the volunteer RE chairs at AUUF have been assuming the duties of a professional DRE without the financial compensation. The more time devoted to building an RE program, the stronger the program, which will translate into a larger and more committed membership.

Hiring a trained, professional DRE with specified duties and time commitment would strengthen RE by offering consistent oversight and development of the program, recruiting and training teachers, mediating conflicts that may arise, and continuing programs already initiated as well as developing new ones. Hiring a DRE acknowledges the importance of building a strong Religious Education program for children and youth that helps fulfill the mission of the church.

Objectives/Strategies:

- a. Create a Job Description for the DRE to include the following:
 - (1) Review and select new curricula and help the teachers revise and adapt them for our use.
 - (2) Train teachers and offer teacher workshops on a regular basis.
 - (3) Offer workshops and RE classes for parents on such topics as nurturing the spiritual lives of children, raising ethical children, or the spiritual journey of parenting.
 - (4) Attend trainings offered by the UUA and the Southeast District and network with DREs in our district.
 - (5) Work toward expanding the RE Program to include the Our Whole Lives Program, the Coming of Age Program, a teen youth group, toddler play group, after-school and summer programs.
- b. Redefine the responsibilities of the Chair and RE Committee in light of having a DRE.
- c. Define the relationship that would exist between the minister and the DRE.
- d. Develop initial plans for the DRE search (for purposes of answering questions that will arise from Fellowship).
- e. Create employment policies and procedures for the DRE position.
- f. Market the need for a DRE to the AUUF.
- g. Secure financial support for the paid DRE.
- h. Conduct a formal search for DRE.

VII. Volunteers. Recruit, train, and support adults who are committed to fulfilling the mission and following the policies and procedures of the AUUF Religious Education Program.

Rationale: AUUF members and friends have expressed a strong desire for a quality children's RE program for every age-group. To that end, adults must be recruited, trained and supported to fulfill the mission of the program.

Objectives/Strategies:

Recruitment -

- a. Review expectations for volunteers (amount of prep time required, scheduling of classes, duration of commitment, teaching model, etc.) to determine how to recruit sufficient teachers to staff a class for every age-group.

- b. Offer workshops on nurturing the spiritual lives of children, raising ethical children and the spiritual journey of parenting, with a goal of recruiting future RE volunteers.
- c. Set aside time during each RE Committee meeting to consider names of potential future teachers, especially non-parents who might agree more readily to teach classes for older children and youth.
- d. Recognize and remind the Fellowship that participation in the RE program is not only a service and gift to the children, but also to parents (all of whom need different kinds of support and help at different times) and to the community as a whole, which could not flourish without broad participation in the education of its young members.
- e. Recruit adult sponsors to travel with older children and youth to regional UU activities, and help to supervise visiting youth groups.
- f. Continue to invite non-teachers into classes as resource people.
- g. Continue to stress the all-inclusive nature of RE in the life of AUUF so each member and friend has a stake in it and actively participates in some aspect of it.

Training -

- a. Encourage teaching teams to develop a covenant for working together cooperatively and in an environment of mutual respect.
- b. Model and encourage behavior consistent with the AUUF Mission Statement and the UUA Principles both in RE classrooms and out.
- c. Continue the team-teaching model so children and youth see adults working together for a common goal.
- d. Conduct an annual RE teacher orientation and additional training sessions throughout the year in curricula and educational techniques.
- e. Help each teacher understand how the chosen curriculum supports the RE Program goals for each class and the annual theme.
- f. Encourage teachers to pursue additional training outside of the AUUF.

Support -

- a. Provide money in the AUUF budget to support those who wish to pursue training.
- b. Conduct periodic teacher social events to share progress and concerns to enhance the teaching experience.
- c. Explore new ways to recognize teachers' contributions.
- d. Continue the high standards set for the Teacher Dedication Ceremony, the RE Children's Service and the teacher appreciation ceremony.
- d. Conduct field trips for classes to help teachers bond with students in a non-class environment.

VIII. Curriculum. Create an integrated children's age span curriculum plan that is consistent with the AUUF RE Program Goals.

Rationale: A comprehensive RE curriculum plan is necessary to ensure that RE goals are met. A Very Good RE curriculum will help recruit and retain volunteer teachers and engage and retain students. Teaching philosophy, techniques, and classroom atmosphere based on the RE Mission Statement and UU principles will model and support curriculum content. The RE curriculum should be comprehensive enough to cover all RE goals, but flexible enough to allow students and teachers to follow their own interests and talents.

Objectives/Strategies:

- a. Determine what content should be included in the curriculum plan.
- b. Determine age appropriate learning objectives for the basic content.
- c. Develop a Sunday curriculum plan that can follow a child from age 3 to age 18 that provides new and challenging experiences each year. Incorporate curricula developed by the UUA.
- d. Determine a teaching philosophy, select a teaching model, and develop training to help teachers create the desired learning environment.
- e. Develop classroom programming that embraces various learning styles and artistic approaches.
 - (1) Integrate music, visual arts, literature, writing, physical activities, drama, photography, videography, new technology and science.
 - (2) Examples include music through opening and closing rituals in classes, all-age get-togethers, play, discussion, acting/role-playing, making up plays/stories, observing/reporting nature, cooperative games.
- f. Develop strategies that allow for the development of creativity, imagination, strength, joy, understanding, sensitivity, empathy, insight, reason, empowerment, compassion, cooperation, sociability, acceptance, respect, tolerance, interest, involvement, knowledge, spirituality, among others.
- g. Consider options for summer programming including activities that bring children and adults together.
- h. Maintain an ongoing calendar for the Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum.

IX. Policies and Procedures. Develop Policies and Procedures that will support and maintain the AUUF Religious Education program.

Rationale: The purpose of RE policies and procedures is to establish guidelines and expectations for appropriate behaviors for all parties involved in RE and to facilitate the smooth running of the RE Program. Policies and procedures will ensure that decisions about the RE program are rooted in an established protocol reflecting the mission statement of AUUF and the mission of the RE program, and will ease the transitions between RE "administrations."

Objectives/Strategies:

- a. Develop policies for enrolling students in RE, incorporating emergency release procedures.

- b. Review any current RE materials that contain information applicable to policy and procedure development.
- c. Incorporate, as is age appropriate, the AUUF “Covenant of Right Relations” (currently in process of being developed) into the RE program.
- d. Establish policies that address expectations of parents and students enrolled in the RE program regarding attendance, conflict management, etc.
- e. Establish policies for children attending RE without a parent or guardian.
- f. Establish the expectation that RE teaching teams will develop their own covenants for working together.
- g. Develop emergency and safety policies and procedures including a policy for responsible use of candles and matches.
- h. Establish policies to assess teacher assignments.
- i. Establish policies that maximize potential as a “safe congregation.”
- j. Establish policies that maximize potential to welcome children with a diversity of ethnicities, backgrounds, sexual orientations, needs and abilities.

X. Physical Environment. Create and maintain a physical environment that is a pleasant, fun, safe place to work, learn, and play.

Rationale: Adequate space, furnishings, and equipment are necessary to implement the RE program goals and to provide an RE curriculum that fulfills the mission of the AUUF Religious Education program.

Objectives/Strategies:

- a. Move forward with the identified improvements needed for the RE Building, furnishings and equipment. See Appendix B for listing.
- b. Develop an easily completed form for the purpose of an annual assessment of the RE building, facilities, and equipment to be completed by RE teachers, staff, and older students in January/February for the purpose of submitting any requests for new equipment or furnishings and for major repairs to the board prior to the development of the annual budget. This assessment should include the entire RE Building, areas in the Busch Center used for RE purposes, and outdoor spaces including the playground and Busch Center grounds used by RE students during playtime.
- c. Develop schedules for routine cleaning (beyond the cleaning done by the paid AUUF cleaning staff) for the RE facilities, hopefully relying on the students as well as adults to participate.
- d. Create a maintenance and supply report form/system that is readily available to all teachers (possibly in the Resource Room) so that B & G, cleaning staff, and the person responsible for RE supplies can easily be informed of work needing done or supplies needing purchased.

- e. After most of the above issues have been addressed, thus making the RE building space “fully functional” and the RE program has used the “fully functional” space for a full RE year, assess whether any major structural changes in the RE building would benefit the RE program.
- f. Develop and post policies for emergencies including medical emergencies and emergency evacuation plans, and perform periodic drills.
- g. Periodically review policies and procedures and train teachers for fire, first aid, and other emergencies including access to phones and review placement of the fire extinguishers.
- h. Determine what space will best work as a DRE office and make plans accordingly.

XI. Growth and Outreach. Promote the AUUF Religious Education Program to children, youth and families of the AUUF and the broader community.

Rationale: Youth participation at AUUF will be stabilized and strengthened through growth in the AUUF Religious Education Program, which, in turn, will have a positive impact on adult (parent) membership. Through growth and outreach of the R.E. Program, AUUF youth will develop a greater sense of the importance of their place at AUUF and as UUs in the larger community.

Objectives/Strategies:

- a. Encourage our RE students to work with youth from other local churches on large projects
- b. Publicize the children and youth contributions to AUUF service projects (Food Bank donations, Holiday Helping Boxes, Valentine Express spending, etc.).
- c. Develop outreach projects in connection with those orchestrated by AUUF Social Action (Habitat, Auburn Day Care Center, Humane Society, etc.). Have a month where youth work with the Give A Plate Committee to determine which community agency/project receives the “plate donation” from the collection baskets.
- d. Encourage RE students to publicize their individual social action work, in venues that might include the AUUF newsletter, larger UU publications, and by sending press releases to the OA News.
- e. Advertise activities for youth and children to AUUF and community at large through informative flyers on greeters’ table, inserts or columns in newsletter, photos and articles in the local newspaper, etc.
- f. Develop strategies for advertising the availability of AUUF RE to the community.
- g. Encourage children and youth to invite friends to AUUF (perhaps through a “Bring a Friend” social activity).

XII. Assess. Annually review and assess the goals and objectives of the Religious Education Long Range Plan.

Rationale: Assessment of the RE Long Range Plan is key to developing and maintaining a strong RE Program that is effective, well-supported, and growing. While several of the LRP goals may also become RE Program goals, an annual review of the LRP goals will track those that have been accomplished and those that need additional focus, as well as identifying new needs and goals that may emerge in light of implementing the Long Range Plan and administering the

RE Program. An annual review and assessment will highlight the importance of the RE Program renew our commitment to it.

Objectives/Strategies:

- a. Develop a procedure that is easy and time efficient to complete.
- b. The annual review should include feedback, as appropriate, by the students, parents, teachers, the RE Committee, the DRE, the minister, and the Fellowship as a whole.
- c. The annual review should result in information to determine what one-time goals have been accomplished, what on-going goals need additional focus, and what aspects are shining examples of the AUUF RE mission statement in action.

APPENDIX A
RE PROGRAM GOAL SUGGESTIONS

The RE LRP Committee took as their task the development of short-term goals for the RE program. However, before making that decision, the committee worked briefly on long-term goals for carrying out the mission of the Children's RE program as outlined in the Mission Statement. We included that work in this appendix because we thought it might be useful to those who are charged with developing RE Program Goals. It is our intention that whoever has the responsibility of developing RE Program Goals will feel free to adopt, modify or discard these preliminary goals.

I. Develop wholeness in children and youth:

- A. Provide age-appropriate, stimulating, fun RE classes and activities*
1. Utilize active learning methods
 2. Bring personal interests, talents, skills into the classrooms
 3. Encourage creative expression through music, drama, art, writing, verbal expression
 4. Utilize the Our Whole Lives curriculum

II. Explore spirituality

- A. Create spiritual awareness*
1. Classroom rituals such as lighting the chalice
- B. Explore UU faith traditions*
1. Study Judeo-Christian roots of UU through UU RE curricula
- C. Explore religious traditions of others*
1. Investigate other faith traditions practicing in Auburn
 2. Study principles of major world religions
 3. Learn about the spiritual journeys of other UUs
- D. Clarify personal religious values*
1. Study UU purposes and principles
 2. Learn values held by other UUs
 3. Identify values held by keepers of other faiths
 4. Decide what is personally important

III. Adherence to AUUF Mission Statement and UUA principles:

- A. Learn what it means as a UU*
1. Study UU evolution from Judeo-Christian roots
 2. Participate in AUUF services and activities
- B. Develop responsibility and responsiveness toward others*
1. Adults at AUUF will model such behaviors by acting in a like manner
 2. RE classroom activities will reflect this attitude
- C. Develop beliefs and learn to act on own convictions*
1. RE classroom activities that encourage discussion, role-play
- D. Articulate who they are and what they believe as UUs, and apply this to daily decision-making*
1. Learn the 7 basic UU Principles

IV. Supportive community

- A. Participate in AUUF services and activities*
1. Explore meaningful ways that RE children and youth can participate in services, rituals, events, activities
 2. Encourage parents to come to services, rituals, events, activities and to bring their children
 3. Develop inter-committee relationships that increase awareness of the needs of children and youth so that these needs will be considered

- B. *Adults model and encourage behavior consistent with AUUF Mission Statement & UUA Principles both in RE classrooms and out*
 - 1. Build a team-teaching model so that children and youth see adults working together for a common goal
- C. *Promote an environment of mutual respect*
 - 1. Consider needs of young people in planning AUUF services, events, activities, etc
 - 2. Discourage “gunplay,” “war games,” “fight scenarios,” etc whenever children are together
 - 3. Encourage cooperative play and respectful behavior
- D. *Maintain facilities that support RE activities*
 - 1. Through inter-committee (Chair Council) relationships
 - 2. Through close association with Buildings and Grounds Committee
- E. *Train teachers in RE curricula, techniques*
 - 1. Set aside money in AUUF budget to support those who wish to pursue training
- F. *Retain youth who enroll in RE programs to last the full year*
 - 1. Work with Membership Committee to notice when parents stop coming or become less active

V. Expressing religious conviction through action in larger community

- A. *Invest both time and resources in AUUF*
 - 1. Encourage children and youth participation in AUUF services, events, etc
- B. *Demonstrate respect for people from other religious groups*
- C. *Speak out about moral and social issues*
 - 1. Participate in AUUF or other social justice commitments
 - 2. Provide opportunities for RE students to participate in the Social Action Committee
 - 3. Include opportunities for RE students to join in Social Action projects, including but not limited to, the Food Bank and the Habitat for Humanity /We-Help-Coalition projects.
 - 4. Invite RE students to develop their own Social Action Projects
 - 5. Invite RE students to help decide where the monthly money from the offering plate will be donated
- D. *Act compassionately and display tolerance*

Appendix B

Identified Needs for the RE Building, Furnishings, and Equipment

- A. Move forward with the identified improvements needed for the RE Building
 - (1) Organize/clean the RE resource room
 - (2) Organize/clean the various RE closets (remove stuff not directly related to RE program)
 - (3) Assess need for storage of RE supplies and materials
 - (4) Repair plaster in the Teen Room (formerly the g..... room)
 - (5) Paint all rooms that need a brighter, more cheerful appearance.
 - (6) Finish the mural on the entry hallway to complete the Coming of Age mural envisioned several years ago.
 - (7) Determine whether the teachers want bulletin boards or white boards hung and if so where in each room.
 - (8) Follow-up with B & G regarding the decisions to date toward reducing mold and mold smell in RE building.

- B. Identify current equipment and furnishing needs for each age group and for shared equipment by surveying teachers and students.
 - (1) Teens (i.e. bean bag chairs and cool posters have been mentioned)
 - (2) Assess the current and potential need/access to media players
 - Determine whether boom boxes currently in the RE building work
 - Determine what AUUF equipment is portable enough for use at Busch Center & RE building (AUUF lcd projector, DVD player, large boom box, video players, and TV's are currently or will be stored in Busch Center.)
 - (3) Assess the various Carpet Sweepers or Vacuums and determine whether any of these are sufficient for the RE Building and if not purchase the most appropriate sweeper/vacuum for the RE Building.