

Children and Youth Faith Formation (CYFF)

Programming for children and youth at UUCM is guided by the Children and Youth Faith Formation Committee, in conjunction with the Religious Education Administrator and the minister. The CYFF Committee is composed of parents, educators, grandparents, and other interested adults.

Children begin each Sunday in the Sanctuary with their families. After singing a hymn and hearing a Story for All Ages, they usually leave to participate in their “Sunday circles.”

On one Sunday, the children might be filling “Blessing Bags” with personal care items for people experiencing homelessness. Another Sunday might see them making posters to remind others to care for our Planet Earth. December’s Holiday season finds them frosting cookies to hand out during the Holiday Fair, and making ornaments illustrating the seven principles.

Many of our children enjoy dramatic expression and visual arts, particularly drawing. A month-long project focused on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Through guided discussion, the children related the parable to their own lives. They compared the acts of the Samaritan to someone who would stand up to help someone being bullied. Each child was encouraged to express their feelings and thoughts through drawing. The group then created short skits demonstrating ways to help someone being bullied, rehearsed these skits, and performed them for the congregation during a Sunday service.

Whole Congregation Worship

In the past decade, the number of children and youth attending church has declined, as it has nationally in many denominations and congregations. The CYFF committee sought consultation about four years ago regarding ways to make Whole Congregation worship effective for people of all ages.

UUCM has traditionally had a number of Whole Congregation services annually. In addition to the familiar Water Communion service at the start of the church year, UUCM has an outdoor Sunday gathering in late September at a nearby conservation area, which is very popular with families and children. On that day, a variety of activities are offered, including a meditative trail walk, water-color painting, building fairy houses, and a philosophical discussion.

During the fall months, children and youth work with adults to create a Holiday pageant, which is typically part of a service in December. The pageant in 2017 was The Solar Express, celebrating the sun’s gifts. The Candlelight Christmas Eve service is a favorite for members of all ages.

A Winter Solstice Service is beloved by all ages, offering a chance to pause in the busy Holiday season and experience the wonder of the season with soft music, candlelight, and community. In this special ceremony for all ages participants are invited to walk a large spiral path laid out in evergreen boughs. At the center, they receive a gift of candle's light by an "angel". This event tends to bring in members of the wider community, especially children. It is a ritual demonstrating the magic of being in community together.

Programs for Youth

Middle School/ Junior High students are offered the Neighboring Faiths curriculum and Our Whole Lives on alternate years. During the current year (2018-19), eight young folk are participating in OWL. In order to include as many teens as possible in this vital program, the OWL coordinator reached out to local congregations describing the program and offering it to any children in grades 7-9 whose parents wanted them to join. Two such families attended the parent information night and enrolled their children in the OWL program. [Leader quote? Parent quote? Teen quote?]

The High School Youth Group (HSYG) meets weekly for 1 1/2 hours, with three adult facilitators. The youth help develop the format and goals for HSYG. In recent years, the youth have taken responsibility for preparing a church service in the Spring, which is always creative and inspiring to the congregation. The facilitators encourage the youth to look for service opportunities, and help make arrangements for service trips. The teens have helped to pack portable meals for people in need. [get teen quote?]