



The Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Santa Monica

September 22, 2011

Dear Coming of Age Youth and Parents/Guardians:

We have just launched our new program year, and this year our congregation's Religious Exploration program is offering our eighth graders a Coming of Age program which honors, celebrates and explores the transition from childhood to youth. Exploring themes like Spirituality, Living Our Religion, Good & Evil, and Life & Death, this curriculum helps them to bring together all that they have learned and experienced in their lives and at church. **At the end of this program, youth will create personal faith statements (credos), which they will present to the congregation in a Sunday morning worship service of their own design, on May 20th (mark your calendars).** Youth will participate in BOTH services. There will be a mandatory rehearsal for the service on Saturday, May 19th from 9am-1pm.

By participating in Coming of Age, we hope each youth will:

- Understand and appreciate UUism in conjunction with their own beliefs and values;
- Gain self-confidence and realize that their feelings are valid and their opinions matter;
- Expand their vision of the world by exposing them to differing views and life experiences;
- Realize they are non-judgmentally accepted in our church community, and that it is a safe place for them to be themselves.

Our Pacific Southwest District is offering a **winter camp for Middle School Youth** that is designed to dovetail with congregational Coming of Age programs and expand upon the same themes addressed in our curriculum. **Camp will take place the weekend of December 2nd – 4th, 2011 (Friday evening-Sunday morning) at our UU Camp de Benneville Pines.** This year's theme is **Food & Faith**. I strongly encourage your youth to attend. Registration forms will be mailed as soon as they are available. Scholarships may be available from UCCSM or from the district for those who are in need of assistance to attend.

The following are a few important administrative items about the structure of our year.

- **Coming of Age meets during the first service only, and begins promptly at 9:00.** This means that COA youth should not to into the sanctuary for the first part of the service, but should head straight up to their classroom (Room 2 upstairs above Forbes Hall).
- **Event Nights for COA/YRUU will be held monthly.** Beach bonfires, pool parties, bowling, laser tag... there's lots of fun in store for our youth this year! Please see the accompanying event page for details about this year's youth event nights. Parents have signed up to coordinate each event (June is still open, though – can you help?), and details as well as permission slips will be mailed out to all participating families at least a week prior to the event. Youth will want to come to church only if they feel they have friends here, and one hour of class time per week won't create real friendships – unstructured and fun social opportunities will. I hope very much that your youth will take part in these opportunities to connect with their fellow COA & YRUU participants.
- **The UCCSM RE UUpdates email is sent weekly** to provide updates about what will happen in class this week, a calendar and announcements for upcoming events, at-home

suggestions for engaging with the themes we're exploring this year, and more. This is a primary means of communication with all of our RE families - if you are not receiving this email, contact me right away so we can get you on the list.

- **All families participating in RE must complete a registration form for each of their children.** These forms are crucial because they include emergency contact information, space to share any special needs or allergies child may have and other important information to help us get to know your child. If you have not already turned in a registration form, one is included in this mailing. Please complete it and bring it on Sunday.
- **Parent participation required:** Your help is vital to the success of our RE program. All parents are asked to contribute some of their time to our RE program this year. There are many different ways to be involved, which require varying levels of commitment. **Please fill out the volunteer commitment form which is attached to your child's registration form.**
- **Snack Signup request coming soon:** We would like to ask parents to sign up to bring a modest snack for their child's class this year, taking the burden off of the shoulders of the volunteer teachers who already do so very much for our program. You will be contacted soon with a request to sign up for a few Sundays during the year. Information about any food allergies as well as suggested snack items will be provided. Sharing food together is part of what binds us together as a caring community of faith, and our kids take snack time VERY seriously! Please help us keep our tradition of providing in-class snacks going.
- **Children/Youth Choir:** Does your child like to sing? Seth Houston, our new music director, is starting an occasional children's/youth choir that will perform a few times a year during Intergenerational Services. Rehearsals will be from 9-9:15 on Sundays (meet in the cottage rather than going to the sanctuary for the first part of the service) for a few weeks leading up to the performances. Contact Catherine@uusm.org if your child or youth is interested in participating. **The first rehearsal is THIS WEEK - Sunday, September 25th!** The choir will also rehearse on 10/16 and 10/23 for performance in service on 10/30, as well as 11/13 for performance in service on 11/20. It is an incredible opportunity for young people in our church to participate in the music program, with guidance from our Music Director. I hope many of you will take advantage of it. Please plan to arrive by 8:50 so the group can be ready to start at 9:00 sharp – fifteen minutes isn't very long to rehearse!
- **Intergenerational services:** Throughout the year, we will have occasional Intergenerational services in which the children and youth are in the sanctuary for the entire service. These services help us celebrate being together as one UCCSM community of all ages, and also provide an important opportunity for young people to experience first-hand the way their parents worship in the sanctuary when they would usually be in their classrooms.

Please return the registration form as quickly as possible. It can be turned in to my box in the main office, or at the Lifespan RE table in Forbes Hall during coffee hour on Sundays. As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you for your involvement; thank you for recognizing the need for religious education in your children and youth's lives...thank you for adding your presence to this community. We are thrilled to have your family among us and look forward to an exciting year together!

See you in church,

Catherine Farmer Loya,
Director of Religious Education
310-829-5436 x105
Catherine@uusm.org