

A Cooperative Religious Education Program: FAQ's

Once your family is enrolled in the teaching cooperative, you will be assigned (based on your preferences as much as is feasible) to a teaching stint and seasons. These answers to the most frequently asked questions may be helpful in understanding the reasons and details of this particular structure. Religious Education is distinctly different from child care and as such is supported by families and the greater community in a personal and thoughtful ministry.

Why a cooperative program when we never had one until several years ago? The previous volunteer model – teaching as an option for those most interested - no longer works. Most people have many roles at church and the pace of life is such that extended teaching commitments are available to only a few. Those few (becoming fewer every year) have been unfairly burdened by having to take on additional teaching commitments in the absence of full participation among parents/guardians.

Why only parents and/or guardians in the cooperative? It is an explicit value of the Unitarian Universalist Association that parents are the primary religious educators to their children. Parents are the most invested in our children's spiritual and religious growth, and as such the most accountable to their children's experience at church. As adults we enter the faith community of our volition. Children do not, and they need guides and role models from their own home in their integration of church and the journey of faith development.

If I'm not a parent of a child in the program can I still teach? As a faith community, we encourage all members to be accountable to our children and their experience. It is our expectation that all parents/guardians will teach and our hope that all adult members will do so as well.

What about my own spiritual life if I miss the adult worship service? We appreciate the need of adults to feed their own religious selves in order to enlarge their capacity to be religious educators to their children. We also appreciate the powerful message that parental participation gives a child. And we appreciate the potential for adults' ongoing religious growth and learning in worship services and in religious education classrooms. Please come to worship when you're not teaching, please come to the 10:00 am family worship service when you are teaching. And please hold open the possibility of your own spiritual deepening while in the teaching ministry at church. If worship is of great value to you, please consider sharing that within the classroom, leading young people in inquiry, meditation, prayer and song.

What do you mean by stints, seasons and teams? The primary grades have 'teaching stints. You can teach for five to six weeks (the minimum parental contribution to the cooperative) or longer. You are signed up for a season (fall, intercession and winter) with a team of several other people. Although you are only responsible for five to six Sundays, most of us don't have five to six Sundays all in a row. Having a team for a season gives you more flexibility in finding a teaching calendar that matches your personal one. We recruit Our Whole Lives leaders among those adults who have the calling and capacity for this important ministry of faith based sexuality education – although we recruit a team, you will have slightly more teaching stints and a different season than the regular Sunday morning classes.

What if I sign up and then life interferes? You are invited to choose the season that makes the most sense for you. If your availability changes, you will be responsible for trading with another teaching adult. The schedule and teaching roster will be posted and available to you electronically from the Religious Education office.