

First Parish of Chelmsford
“RE” Faith Formation Volunteer Handbook



It's not our job to toughen our children up to face a cruel and heartless world. It's our job to raise children who will make the world a little less cruel and heartless. -G.R. Knost

DRE & Faith Formation & YP (“DRE”) Dolores GHeredia-Wood dre@uuchelmsford.org PH: 954-588-6836
RE Faith Formation Website: <http://www.uuchelmsford.org/re/>

Our mission is to give our youth confidence, a sense of worth and belonging to a loving community!
We do this through the ethical, spiritual Faith Formation of their Unitarian Universalist Identity.

The RE Faith Formation Program is a collaborative between FPC Members; RE Faith Formation Council and directed by the Director of RE Faith Formation & Youth Programs. With deep gratitude and appreciation to all RE Faith Formation who have made a difference in the lives of our children now, in the past and in the future.

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General Volunteering Information:

- **Chapel Buddies/Leaders:** Assist in maintaining an environment conducive to worship and assisting youth to develop a sense of belonging by encouraging them to participate. Please remember the main thing is to encourage lifelong UU friendships. During activity stations we allow older youth to “hang out” with their friends.
- **RE UU Faith Formation Co-Group Leader Pre-K to 7th:** Provide a welcoming space where youth now they are beloved. An agenda is provided that includes chalice lighting; reflection/meditation; and an activity based on the theme/topic. We use many resources including the UUA Tapestry of Faith curriculum and Soul Matters. Time commitment varies from once or twice a month throughout the year.
- **High School Youth Volunteer: 8th grade to 12** (Please let Dolores know if you are interested. Please note parents of youth in this age group cannot volunteer to be with group)
- **Volunteering Flexibility:** We appreciate flexibility, but if you have a preference of age group please “DRE” know and we will do our best to accommodate you.
- **Training/Orientation Meeting:** is required for new volunteers beginning 2018-19 per FPC Safety Policy by “DRE.” Volunteers prior to 2018-19 training is available as needed, or upon request.

Safety Documents:

- **Director of RE Faith Formation & Youth Programs is the only contact person for the following: All volunteers are required to fill out/sign the following provided and returned to “DRE” only.**
- RE Faith Formation required CORI and National Background Form (rv. 2018-19)
- Volunteer will sign FPC Code of Conduct (rv. 2018-19)
- Please review revised 2018-19 “RE” Faith Formation Safety and Health Guidelines* (There are hardcopies in REFF office)

Important Safety Notes: Two volunteers are always required when volunteering with youth.

- RE Faith Formation Practice is that younger children always need to be accompanied by two adults during RE Faith Formation. If a child needs to go to the bathroom, (and “DRE” is not around,) younger groups go together as a group on a "bathroom fieldtrip." Before embarking on “bathroom fieldtrip” as children to please wait until their parents pick them up.
- Please remind parents/children/youth to go before/after accompanied by parent/guardian.

Snacks & Allergies:

- Volunteer need to make sure and check attendance sheet for any children with allergies.
- Snacks and water are provided for all children. (organic popcorn and/or pretzels, fruit)
- Children may bring comparable snack that accommodates allergies.
- Allergies are a shared responsibility, encourage children/youth to speak up about their allergies.

Volunteer Scheduling:

- Volunteers are asked to fill out a “Volunteer Calendar” form indicating availability. They are available via e-mail, “RE” Faith Formation office or at “RE” Table in vestry on Sunday mornings.
- Please return forms via email or in inbox in “RE” Faith Formation office.
- Please email any updates thereafter. dre@uuchelmsford.org and any updates thereafter.
- **After you let us know your availability this is what happens next:**
 - “DRE” will confirm with you a few days before that you are still available and send out an agenda by the Friday before the Sunday you are scheduled. The agendas are as self-explanatory as possible. However, if you would like a training meeting please contact “DRE”
- **If you are unable to make it on a Sunday that you are scheduled, please contact:**
 - Please notify as soon as you can, we understand emergencies and change of plans occur.
 - 24 prior notice is greatly appreciated.
 - DREFF&YP (“DRE”) Dolores Gheredia-Wood directly: Text/Call: 954-588-6836
 - Please leave a message if there is no answer and expect a verification of message/call.
 - You can also email dre@uuchelmsford.org , *only if 24 hours before.*
(24 hour notice is appreciated)

Things to know:

- We ask all RE Faith Formation volunteers to please be here no later than 9:30 am to make sure we are all on the 'same page.' And stay until 11:15ish. Do not leave until children/youth are picked up.
- “Same Page” means touching base with Group co-leader/chapel buddies and “DRE” on Sundays and review agenda and group dynamics.
- Please adhere to agenda as much as possible it is based on the UU RE Faith Formation curriculum resources and a Tri Year Cycle: UUID; FPC Community; World Community
- Groups Curriculum (UUA Resources; Website, Renaissance Modules, “DRE” Clusters; prior resources)
Early Beginners: UU Basics; 2 to 6 Groups: UU Peer Bonding Focused; High School: UU Identity Development.
- Great Ideas and Perspectives, and Feedback are always welcomed!
Please e-mail or speak to “DRE” dre@uuchelmsford.org

Role DREFF&YP (“DRE”) Director of “RE” Faith Formation & Youth Programs

- ❖ Sets up materials each Sunday and supervises set up of groups by Nursery Care Givers.
- ❖ Welcome newcomers on Sunday mornings and show them which group they can join up with for the day.
- ❖ Resolves issues involving the need to replace absent volunteers.
- ❖ Visits each group on Sunday mornings to check in with everyone and make sure everything is running smoothly.
- ❖ Assist with discipline as needed. If a child needs time away from their group to process why they are having a difficult time behaving properly, the facilitator sits with them, or brings them to the DRE&YP
- ❖ RECoA is responsible for Sunday Morning when the DRE&YP is not present.

Role of the Group Leader (co-leader); Chapel Leader/Buddy

- ❖ Sit with group in sanctuary at designated pews when children go as a group to sanctuary. Remind children of Sanctuary Etiquette prior to going to sanctuary and during as needed.
- ❖ Stay engaged and present during Children’s Chapel services or group activities. Assist children in remaining engaged and listen and participate in children’s chapel.
- ❖ Welcome children make sure sign-in/out (early beginners sign-out); lead the chalice lighting and covenant review and closing as well as write up the classroom communication form as needed.
- ❖ Travel with the children as needed and assist their group with projects and activities. Work closely with the children and connect with the children as they work with encouraging words.
- ❖ Review and become familiar with the current safety and discipline policy and follow the steps in the policy to help maintain a positive classroom atmosphere for everyone.
- ❖ Inform “DRE” of any incidents, concerns, and provide feedback about occurrences in Chapel or Groups.

Typical Sunday Outline

	Volunteer Training as needed*Please contact DREFF&YP
9:50 10:00	Welcome and Check-in <i>TBD because ABP: 2018-19</i>
10:05-	Chalice & Review Covenant
10:15-	Spiritual Practice: Meditation/Chime
10:20	Group Objective Introduction
10:25	Activity ONE; Game....
10:35	Activity TWO/Snack
10:50-	Closing Circle & Journaling *joys & sorrow/one word closing Journaling until time to leave or picked up
11:00	Thank you, see you next time!

Things to know:

- ❖ RE Volunteers come in by 9:30 and make sure all materials for day are ready (DRE will have most of the things set up)
- ❖ Group Leaders/Chapel Buddies are on the look out to welcome newcomers on Sunday mornings and show them which group they can join up with for the day.
- ❖ If there are any new children, give their parents a visitor form to fill out before leaving or if necessary before picking up their child.; Introduce class to Co-Leader/Chapel Buddy
- ❖ Completed attendance form (verify allergies)
- ❖ Completed communication/feedback form
- ❖ Leaders make sure room is cleared; Invite everyone to help clean up together!
- ❖ Wait with children until parents pick them up; if not picked up by 11:15 drop off with DRE. (only applies to children under 12 years old)
- ❖ Nursery Caregivers: set-up and pick-up snacks and supplies used
- ❖ Thank you!!!



What Makes a Great Leader/Chapel Buddy?

Try to draw out quiet children

Use children's names

Practice active listening

Be encouraging

Work to get to know all of the children in your group

Practice positive discipline

Give children the opportunity to do the right thing

Remember the guides & teachers are a team and both participate

Have a sense of humor

Have fun! Make sure children have fun! Have fun!

Start with a fresh slate – giving children the benefit of having had a summer to grow and mature.

Great First Impressions!

Adapted by Rev. Dan Harper from material by Ann Fields.

What do you do in those two to five minutes as some of the children tear into your classroom, and others drift in slowly talking to their friends? Those first two to five minutes can set the tone for a wonderful, cooperative class that's enjoyable for teacher and children alike. By engaging the attention of the children at the very beginning of a session, you will dramatically reduce behavior problems.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

Greet each child as she or he arrives: Welcome!

Have "straggle-in" activities ready to engage interest and energy: Something to do!

Have a new picture or pictures on the wall: Something to see!

Play a recording of music or speech: Something to hear!

Begin with a startling statement or question: "How do you think that..." or "What if I told you that...": Something to catch attention!

Begin with a mystery or a puzzle that creates suspense: Something to figure out!

Have things to pick up and handle: a chalice, a menorah, a prayer rug: Something to touch!

Begin with a game that gives everyone a chance to meet everyone else: Something to play!

Start with a song: Something to sing!

“RE” Faith Formation Guidelines:

Covenants:

- Making a covenant empowers children to take responsibility for their individual and collective behavior in
- their group and helps create a safe place.
-
- You can prompt, if needed, with: listening to one another, including everybody sharing, taking turns, helping one another, keeping our hands to ourselves, and loving kindness to all.
- Help children reframe “don’ts (don’t insult others, don’t steal, don’t lie) as desirable behaviors (use kind words, respect others’ property, be honest).
- When ideas stop flowing or the list seems complete, tell the children you will include their suggestions in a group behavior covenant for everyone in this class, including co-leaders.
- Children may ask, “What happens if someone breaks the covenant?” Ask them what they think should happen. You might say: If someone does break our covenant, we will stop what we are doing and review our covenant. We will talk again about what the covenant is and why we have it.
- Remember to include what you as a leader thinks is important; you are part of the covenant too.

Big Picture/Spiritual Practice/Journaling...

Please have students write their name on journal and keep them cabinet in room.

- **Big Picture:** The curriculum/agenda is intended as a guideline for the class. The teachers can adjust them as needed if key points are being addressed. Key points are the Chalice lighting (Faith); Journaling (Spiritual); Days’ lesson (Ethical) and having fun. Our hope is that when all these come together our youth gain the knowledge to explore their UU id.
- **Same page context** 😊
Spiritual practices: routinely asking them to all be quiet for a few moments and reflect. This helps center them and bring them into the space from their busy daily routines. Sometimes quiet music helps...
Also, a few moments of quite time helps prepare them to better enjoy the worship experience when they are in the sanctuary or at chapel.
- **The journals are part of the bigger picture...** As part of religious faith formation one of our goals is to give youth tools that will help and comfort them as they go on their journeys in life. We need to tend our student’s spirituality along with ethical and basic faith formation. A Spiritual Practice is meant to be one of these tools we can offer as they go on their journey in life. Community building attends to our outside nature, but spiritual practices help us nurture our inner selves and listen to the voice within.

Opening and Closing Circles

Written by Rev. Dan Harper adapted by DRE&YP Kahn-Greene

Why have an opening circle?

-- ***Sharing circles are an excellent way to provide a regular age-appropriate worshipful experience for children. To have the same Why have an opening circle?***

-- Sharing circles are an excellent way to provide a regular age-appropriate worshipful experience for children. To have the same worshipful experience every time they meet can help children to feel some stability in the program. Even though teachers change week by week, even if a child misses a few weeks, he or she will know at least one thing will remain the same.

-- Everyone has an equal chance to be heard in sharing circles. Studies show that even in the most enlightened classrooms, girls are not given as many chances to speak as are boys. Giving everyone an equal chance to talk and be heard also improves group dynamics by helping children learn to affirm the personal concerns of each other.

-- Sharing circles calm children down after their mad dash to get to the classroom. Calm children tend to be better-behaved children. In addition, important personal concerns brought up in the sharing circle can help group leaders understand weekly changes in behavior. Begin every class with a sharing circle and you will have fewer behavior problems!

How to lead an opening circle

Have the children sit in a circle -- around a table or on rug squares on the floor, depending on their ages and on the room you are in. Light a candle or chalice in the center of the circle. As group leader, you then state the rules for the sharing circle:

- "As we go around the circle, each person will get a turn to talk.
- "When it's your turn, start by saying your name. Then you may tell about something good or something bad that happened to you in the past week. You may also choose to pass, which means you only say your name.
- "The only person who may speak is the one whose turn it is."

You, as the group leader, should begin the sharing. It's best for the group leader to know in advance what she or he will say, because the leader sets the tone for everyone else. When one person is talking, you should make sure no one else talks (but don't fall into the common trap of responding yourself to what someone has said -- the leader should follow the rules, too).

Why have a closing circle?

Children, and adults, need a sense of closure. They need to know when Sunday school is over. In terms of group dynamics, each class needs to come together as a group one last time before they go off to whatever they are going to do next.

Like an opening circle, a closing circle can be a good way to keep the religion in religious education. A closing circle can also be a good teaching tool -- in a closing circle, you and the children take another look at what you have learned together.

Leading a closing sharing circle

Begin with a brief chance to share with each other.

Everyone sits in a circle. Everyone has a chance to share something she or he learned (or something she or he especially liked about the class), though anyone may pass and choose not to share. Only one person shares at a time, and everyone else should remain silent while that person is sharing.

Other ways children can share:

- Each child shows something that he or she has made in class that morning. They might pin a picture on a bulletin board, or hold a mask or a sculpture up and tell the group about it.
- If you have done movement or acting or role-playing in class, each child might act out a character from a story they have heard that day. Have them say which character they have chosen first. They can stand up and do a speaking role, or just sit and make the kind of face they think that character would have.

The group leader ends the circle with closing words (which will be supplied in the curriculum box) or a familiar song together.

RE Faith Formation Volunteers Resources:

Helpful Hints-

We learn best by relating new information to facts and knowledge that we already understand and can relate to.¹

How can you relate your lesson to what the children already know?

Ask them! “What do you know about...”, “What do you think _____ means?”, “Who can tell me what a _____ is?” Start with their answers and tie your new information back to their experiences.

We learn best when activities stimulate our key learning styles.²

Some may like to be active and move their bodies to express their thoughts (i.e. drama, sport, dance) while others may wish to draw or write or talk about their thoughts. We can't engage all learning styles all the time, but try to offer a variety of at least two or three within the agenda. Move, create, write, build, draw, eat, sing, talk, think...

We learn best when we feel comfortable and feel safe in our environment.¹

How can I help make everyone feel safe and comfortable?

- Listen to the needs of your group—if children are having trouble sitting still it might be time for an “energy break” which is a time to get up and move to redirect extra energy.
- Be aware for the classroom dynamics and use the classroom covenant (the promises that the children agreed upon at the beginning of the year) to hold the children accountable for their behavior.
- Call children by their names and give them kind and supportive attention so they feel welcomed and loved.
- Play a simple game to have fun and lighten the mood if needed! (i.e. charades, etc. with themes from the days' lesson)
- **Children learn best when we are challenged a little bit. Don't provide answers right away. Have them take a moment and “pause and think”**
- **Children learn best when we provide material that we can apply to our own lives.**
- **Children learn best when our adults are honest, comfortable and authentic.**

How can I remain comfortable when leading?

Make sure you are prepared. Know your material and the goals of the agenda so you can start and set the tone of your class as someone who is prepared and can be trusted by the children. Find something in the material that speaks to you that you love and make sure you share that energy with the class. Make room for yourself to make mistakes and be human. Find the gems and blessings that emerge when teaching and savor them because they are wonderful! Have fun!

Resources: ¹ For more information ask DRE&YP about the book, “Ways of Learning” by Alan Pritchard.; For more information about “Multiple Intelligences” and the work of Howard Gardiner review your Multiple Intelligences handouts.; For more information see Faith Stages handouts or ask DRE&YP about Tracy L. Hurd's book “Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook.”⁴ For More information ask DRE&YP about the work of Parker Palmer and his book “The Courage to Teach”.

Eight Styles of Learning
Adapted from Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner

Linguistic Learner

likes to: read, write and tell stories.

is good at: memorizing names, places, dates and trivia.

learns best by: saying, hearing and seeing words.

Logical/Mathematical Learner

likes to: do experiments, figure things out, work with numbers, ask questions and explore patterns and relationships.

is good at: math, reasoning, logic and problem solving.

learns best by: categorizing, classifying and working with abstract patterns/relationships.

Spatial Learner

likes to: draw, build, design and create things, daydream, look at pictures/slides, watch movies and play with machines.

is good at: imagining things, sensing changes, mazes/puzzles and reading maps, charts.

learns best by: visualizing, dreaming, using the mind's eye and working with colors/pictures.

Musical Learner

likes to: sing, hum tunes, listen to music, play an instrument and respond to music.

good at: picking up sounds, remembering melodies, noticing pitches/rhythms and keeping time.

learns best by: rhythm, melody and music.

Bodily/Kinesthetic Learner

likes to: move around, touch and talk and use body language.

is good at: physical activities (sports/dance/acting) and crafts.

learns best by: touching, moving, interacting with space and processing knowledge through bodily sensations.

Naturalistic Learner

likes to: be outside, with animals, geography, and weather; interacting with the surroundings .

is good at: categorizing, organizing a living area, planning a trip, preservation, and conservation.

learns best by: studying natural phenomenon, in a natural setting, learning about how things work.

Interpersonal Learner

likes to: have lots of friends, talk to people and join groups.

is good at: understanding people, leading others, organizing, communicating, manipulating and mediating conflicts.

learns best by: sharing, comparing, relating, cooperating and interviewing.

Intrapersonal Learner

likes to: work alone and pursue own interests.

is good at: understanding self, focusing inward on feelings/dreams, following instincts, pursuing interests/goals and being original.

learns best by: working alone, individualized projects, self-paced instruction and having own space.

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person..."

Honoring the First Principle Behavior policy for "RE" Faith Formation at First Parish

Along with our supportive affirmation of positive behavior, the Religious Education Committee has developed a policy for the respectful treatment of others. The following guidelines are encouraged to help our program remain a pleasant and productive place to learn, practice, and grow in our values and Unitarian Universalist Principles.

Expectations for participation in UU RE (These will be posted in every classroom)

- *Speak and behave respectfully
- *Use indoor voices
- *Listen when someone else is speaking
- *Participate in activities to the best of your ability
- *Walk in the building
- *Keep hands and feet to yourself

If a child has difficulty acting within these guidelines in a group, the adult will use steps we have developed to help support the child back to positive behavior. If the child continues to have a problem, s/he will visit the DRE office and, in a non-threatening atmosphere, will work out a plan for better cooperation.

We expect that parents will supervise their own children outside of class time, however, all adults are encouraged to support children who they notice having difficulties.

We also assume all adults in our UU community will model and support positive behaviors for the social and moral growth of our children.

Steps Leader take for...
Honoring the First Principle
-The inherent worth and dignity of every person

ASSUMPTION: The child is basically a lovable and capable person. Right now there's a problem that needs attention. Once aware of it, he or she will probably respond responsibly.

STEPS TO FOLLOW TO ENGAGE COOPERATION:

1. DESCRIBE ...the problem in the classroom. We recommend using an "I-message".

Example: "I hear people using loud voices, I can't hear Joey speaking"

2. REMIND...children of agreed on group rules.

Hint- asks particular child/children involved in problem to read the specific rule, paying attention not to shame or embarrass them.

2. SPEAK DIRECTLY.... to the child/children involved.

a) Take the person aside

b) Restate the problem

c) Acknowledge his/her part in the problem

d) Discuss how s/he will solve the problem honoring the classroom rules

e) State your expectations and give child a choice to follow classroom rules, or, if s/he can't handle it, visit the RE office.

Hint-You can also divert misbehavior with a group job for the child.

f) If the child chooses to remain in the room, but her/his behavior shows that s/he can't handle it, let the child know that his/her behavior says that s/he needs to be in the "RE" office for a while.

4. PROBLEM SOLVING IN THE "RE" OFFICE...using the "Honoring the First Principle" form:

a)Leader explains situation to DRE (then goes back to class)

b)Child explains situation to their own understanding to the DRE

c)Child's feelings and needs are addressed

d)DRE and child brainstorm solutions on the Honoring the First Principle form

e)DRE and child check over brainstorm and agree on one solution

f) Child may have opportunity to return to class.

5. PARENT INVOLVEMENT: The leaders needs to notify the parent or guardian that there was an issue that day and that s/he needs to go to the office to speak with the DRE and sign the Honoring the First Principle form.

“Honoring the First Principle” Form

Affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person

Date: This morning _____ had difficulty in class.

The situation was:

Some of the ideas we had to help this matter were:

Together we decided that the best idea is:

We are going to follow this up by:

Young person's signature

DREFF&YP signature

I have read this information:

Parent's/Guardian's signature

Date

Health and Safety Guidelines: First Congregational Society, Church School

First Congregational Society Child Policy

General Purpose Statement

At First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford MA, we are concerned with your child's health and safety as well as your child's religious education. We seek to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations. These health and safety guidelines are set up to ensure that First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford is a safe and healthy place for all children and youth. Please become familiar with the following guidelines for the Church School:

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term "worker" includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term "volunteer" means anyone involved in any activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors. National background checks are not required to be conducted on Sunday School or Vacation Bible School volunteers.*

Selection of Workers/Volunteers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **One Year Rule**

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until being involved with First Parish Congregation of Chelmsford for a minimum of one year. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work/volunteer with children are required to fill a written application form supplied by the Director of Religious Education to be completed, signed and returned to the Director of Religious Education. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous religious organization affiliation, references and employment information. The application form will be maintained in confidence securely filed in the First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford Religious Education Office.

c) **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview with the Director of Religious of Education may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d) **Reference Checks**

A minimum of two reference checks on all employees and volunteers will be conducted. Reference checks will be institutional in nature (organizations where the applicant worked or volunteered with minors in the past) e.g. other churches, scouts, etc. These reference checks are required for anyone involved in overnight activities involving minors, counseling of minors or one-on-one mentoring of minors. Sunday Morning School volunteer reference checks are applicable as determined by Director of Religious of Education. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence securely filed in the First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford Religious Education Office.

e) **National Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and all “volunteers” who interact with children in church activities with the exception of Sunday Morning School volunteers. Before a background check is run, prospective workers/volunteers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford as per First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford National Background Check and CORI policy to run the check. All volunteers including Sunday Morning School volunteers are required a CORI check. Any individual declining to sign the authorization form will be unable to work with children.

As stated in Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford National Background Check and CORI policy a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Minister, Director of Religious Education and Standing Committee Chair on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence securely on file in the Minister office.

Medical Alerts

We ask parents whose children are on specific medications or have a medical condition alert their child’s teachers to their special needs and notify Director of Religious Education. Medications are to be listed in Religious Education Registration Form maintained in Religious Education Office. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to inform RE Staff of updates as needed.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

Drop-off for Nursery, Pre K and Kindergarten will begin 15 minutes prior to the church service or 9:50 am.

Parents are to let child’s teacher know that their child is ready to attend class and the care and responsibility for the child will be shifted to the teacher.

Children below third grade will be signed in by a parent or guardian on attendance sheet. Youth in third grade or older can sign in themselves and teacher/leader will verify they have before end of session.

Parents are to pick up their children at 11:00. Only children in the 4th grade and above are allowed to leave the classrooms by themselves after church school. Children not picked up by 11:15 p.m. will be escorted to the vestry by the teacher.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional

Snacks/Allergies

Snacks at church school are not meant to be a meal. Please let the teachers know of any food allergies or special dietary needs your child has. All food allergies or foods not tolerated by your child should be documented and forwarded to the RE office for filing when child are registered in Religious Education program. Allergies will be posted on Attendance Sheets and elsewhere per First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford Policy.

Building Safety

A First Aid kit is available across from the Religious Education office in the Hallway cabinet, chapel and in the kitchen. An escape plan and location of fire extinguishers is posted near the doorways on each floor of the church school. The church school conducts a yearly fire/emergency drill.

Field Trips

Parents need to sign permission slips when children are leaving the church premises. **The cemetery and common do not require permission slips.** The destination and expected time of return should be on the permission slip. The parents will provide the teachers with a list of emergency contacts, and medical insurance/contact information for each child. There will be a minimum of 2 adults going with the children as outlined in the Safe Child Policy. All drivers must be covered by auto insurance. Children under 8 who require a car seat or booster must be secured prior to leaving the premises. All other occupants must also wear seat belts. All drivers should be over 21 years of age if possible.

Difficult Incidents/Behavioral Difficulties

Child Care Providers will immediately report any accident to the person in charge to the Director of Religious Education or to the person in charge of the event and to the parents/guardian. If any child's behavior creates a dangerous or distracting environment, a Care Provider or the adult on duty will escort child to the parent/guardian or other responsible adult.

Child Protection and Safety

If a teacher or youth group leader suspects or is made aware of child abuse or has a concern about a child's safety and well-being, this information is to be reported immediately to the DRE, minister, choir director or other adult in charge. The minister, DRE and choir directors are Mandatory Reporters and will report the information to the correct authorities. There must be no use of alcohol or illegal drugs at events specifically for the children or youth

groups. If drug use or alcohol use is suspected, the illegal items will be confiscated and the incident will be reported to the parents, the person in charge of the event, and a report will be given to the Standing Committee, Minister, DRE, or Minister of Music as appropriate. In the event that medical attention is necessary – this must be the first priority of the person in charge of the event.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Director of Religious Education and/or Minister for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law. In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
3. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The Minister and Standing Committee chair are the organizations designated spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect as stated in First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford Policy. The advice of UUA legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.

6. A pastoral care will be arranged for those who desire it as deemed necessary by minister at their discretion. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth and/or follow Limited Access Sexual Misconduct Agreement as per Minister and Standing Committee Chair Safety Policy. Any person found not guilty will have discussion of process or reengagement with Minister and Director of Religious Education and Standing Committee Chair.

Supervision Requirements

- A.** For the purposes of these requirements, a “group” is defined as those minors who have been assigned to a nursery, preschool, or individual class or specific program or activity within the context of that class, as well as youth who are taking part in a planned, organized component of any church-related program (ex. Coming Of Age, Our Whole Lives, UU School of Rock, retreats, choir, etc.).
- B. Open Door Policy:** Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.
- C. Two Adult Rule:** There should be a minimum of two adults scheduled to supervise groups. Exceptions may be made only by the on-site responsible adult leader or person in charge of the event. (For instance, the Director of Religious Education can decide that a youth/adult pair can teach a class on Sunday morning, rather than two adults.) It should always be made clear to all volunteers who is in charge. It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult staff leader in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation
- D. Restroom Guidelines:** Children 12 years of age and younger are to be escorted by two volunteers/workers to the hallway bathroom. Youth 12 years of age and older must go in pairs. This is for their safety to ensure they do not leave the building, or encounter a predator while alone in the hallway. If two volunteers/workers are not available they should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone or leaving only one adult in room with children. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child. For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.
- E.** In Accordance to First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford Code of Conduct and compliance with Church Insurance (Emery & Webb) referring to RE Faith Formation worker/volunteer if an adult violates any of its provisions, they may be removed as a worker at church events. All RE Faith Formation Sunday School volunteers/workers are strongly encouraged confidential full disclosure to minister of any legal or personal past events or incidents that may be cause of concern to First Parish Congregational Society of Chelmsford as required by FPC Church Policy. (rv. 2018 REC)

First Congregational Society

First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church of Chelmsford

Religious Education Church School Code of Conduct for Adults Working/Volunteering with Children and Youth Policy

A. Adults who work with children and youth at First Parish are expected to make the best interests of children and youth their first priority. Adults are expected to nurture the physical, emotional, and spiritual growth of children and youth by fostering an environment of kindness, trust, respectfulness, and fun. No one's enjoyment should ever be at the expense of another person's health or self-esteem. In this manner, we hope to create an environment in which children and youth will be able to explore the spiritual and religious nature of their lives, both as individuals and as members of a community. In light of this, there are some specific expectations that the church has of adults while they are working with children and youth, or at a church-sponsored event. They are as follows:

“Friendship” with Youth – Although we hope that youth and adults will have genuine fondness for one another, any adult who looks to youth for “friendship” is not sufficiently mature to be in a position of responsibility over them. A “friendship” is reciprocal, where neither person has more responsibility for the health of the relationship than the other. This is antithetical to the adult/youth relationship, where the adult is the one who assumes primary responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries and cultivating an atmosphere of health and trust. It is expected that relationships that an adult has with youth who have grown to adulthood will not become exploitive.

Unofficial Contact With Youth Outside of Church Programs – Sometimes a genuine mentoring relationship will develop between a youth and an adult. These can be not only healthy, but transformative for both. However, it is our concern that a “predator” who does not have the best interest of the youth at heart, will try to disguise an unhealthy relationship with a youth as a mentoring relationship. Therefore, if you wish to be in contact with a youth outside the normal channels of church-sponsored events, it must be with the knowledge and consent of the parents or guardians. This is for the protection of the youth from potential predators, and also for your own protection. You will best protect yourself from false accusations of misconduct by keeping the parents informed of your actions.

Sexualized Behavior – It is never appropriate to engage in any manner of sexual behavior with a child or youth. This refers not only to explicit sexual behavior, but also to sexually provocative behavior or language. It is not appropriate to tell jokes with sexual content, for example, or to make intentional “double meaning.” Physical expressions of affection such as hugs have their place, but it is best to allow the child or youth to initiate them and the adult must be sensitive not to allow them to be prolonged. Inappropriate Sexualized Behavior will not be tolerated; Action enforced per First Parish Congregational Society Safety Policy.

Classroom Conduct – Any adult found to engage in questionable or objectionable conduct will be removed from contact with that child or youth. Objectionable or questionable conduct may be defined as the non-accidental commission of any act against a child which causes or creates a risk of physical or emotional injury; serious physical injury or commission of a sex offense against a child, including sexual contact. Neglect is also considered objectionable conduct under Massachusetts law.

Neglect as defined under Mass. Laws includes the failure by a caretaker either deliberately, through negligence or inability, to take actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability and growth, or other essential care.

Drugs and Alcohol – An adult who is found to be under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol while working with children or youth, or who provides drugs or alcohol to minors, will be immediately removed from contact with children or youth.

Confidentiality – adults who work with children and youth under the aegis (the protection, backing, or support) of the church are responsible not only to the children and youth, but to the church as well. Sometimes you will learn that a child or youth is a victim of abuse, is suicidal, has a serious drug problem, etc. **YOU MUST NOT KEEP SUCH INFORMATION TO YOURSELF.** For this reason, please try never to give children or youth the impression that you will keep such secrets for them.

- a. **CONFIDENTIALITY IS NOT SECRET KEEPING.** For the most part a covenant of confidentiality will mean that you do not repeat information told to you in confidence. However, when the information is potentially damaging to the child or youth, encourage the child or youth to seek help from a parent or other authority figure. In addition you yourself **MUST** talk with Minister and/or Director of Religious Education about an appropriate course of action.

Restroom Guidelines: Children 12 years of age and younger are to be escorted by two volunteers/workers to the hallway bathroom. Youth 12 years of age and older must go in pairs. This is for their safety to ensure they do not leave the building, or encounter a predator while alone in the hallway. If two volunteers/workers are not available they should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone or leaving only one adult in room with children. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child. For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Accordance with This Code of Conduct

A. Any adult working with children or youth in a church-related program who disagrees with any portion of the code is free to discuss their opinions with the Standing Committee. Any alterations to this document need to be approved by the Standing Committee before a volunteer begins working with children or youth.

B. By signing below, the signatory indicates that they have read this Code of Conduct and agrees to abide by it including submission to CORI* and National Background checks. If an adult violates any of its provisions, they may be removed as a worker at church events. All RE Faith Formation Volunteers are strongly encouraged confidential full disclosure to minister of any legal or personal past events or incidents that may be cause of concern to per First Congregational Society/First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church of Chelmsford Disruptive and Unsafe Behavior Policy.

C. I have read and understand our congregation's policies on keeping children, youth and vulnerable adults safe.

Signature of adult volunteer/worker

Date

Printed name of adult