

Children's Religious Education

A Sample Program, by Reverend Pat Hoertdoerfer

Goals for Participants

- To learn about and gain understanding of the rights of all children
- To experience a sense of community/solidarity with children everywhere who are part of the human family
- To explore connections between values inherent in justice actions and values of Unitarian Universalism
- To deepen awareness of justice issues for children in their own community
- To successfully participate in a collective justice project and to experience a sense of putting their faith in action.

Session Summary

- Gathering activity
- Same But Different game
- *For Every Child* story and message
- Social justice project participation
- Closing

Materials

- Name tags for participants
- Poster-size copies of United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child and Unitarian Universalist Principles
- Pictures of children and families and things children need every day—food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, play, love, and respect
- Newsprint and markers
- Paper and crayons
- Handout #1, Symbols of Children's Rights
- Handout #2, Unitarian Universalist Principles (children's version)
- Book *For Every Child* published in association with UNICEF (New York: Phyllis Fogelman Books, 2001)
- Chalice, candle, and matches

Preparation

- Invite youths and/or adults (at least two weeks prior to class time) to come to class and invite children to partic-

ipate in one of your congregation's social service projects appropriate for children and congruent with the themes of the Rights of the Child. Ask them to bring a Letter to Children and Families explaining the project, including date, time, place, and the ways to participate.

- Be familiar with the United Nations 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child.
- Post pictures of children and families and things children need every day—food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, play, love, and respect—around the room.
- Copy Handout #1, Handout #2, and Letter to Children and Families for each participant.
- Cut paper into 12" diameter circle for each child.

Session Plan

Gathering

Greet children by name as they arrive and help them find their name tags. Give each child a paper circle and ask him/her to draw and/or color pictures of people, places, or things that he/she needs every day to live.

Focusing

Invite children into your opening circle and tell them that today is a special day focusing on children—their needs and their rights. This day we call Children's Sabbath. Ask them to share one picture that they drew in their circle—some person, place, or thing they need each day. After all children have shared their pictures, summarize their statements by naming the people, places, and things that are important to each of them.

Then invite them to play "The Same But Different" game. Ask them to stand in a circle and explain that when you name a person, place, or thing, they are to jump into the center of the circle if it is important to them. Then all the children in the center are asked to share how their person, place, or thing is "the same but different" from others in the center. Then children are asked to find a different place to stand on the circle. Repeat the procedure.

Unitarian Universalist Resources for the Children's Sabbath

Play the game for about 10 minutes. Name the following categories and invite their responses:

Parents	Family
Home	Playthings
Food	Clothing
School	Love and care

After the game ask them to sit in a circle and engage them in conversation around some questions like the following:

- Do you think HOME is important to children in Alaska? California? Minnesota? South Carolina? Why?
- Do you think SCHOOL is important to children in South Africa? Germany? Vietnam? Nicaragua? Why?
- Do you think FOOD is important to children in the city? On a farm? In the desert? On an island? Why?
- Do you think LOVE is important to children everywhere? Why?

Reflecting

Gather the children for a story and introduce the book *For Every Child* with the question: Do you think there are people, places, and things important to EVERY child in the whole world? Pause and listen to their responses. Then read the book, share the picture on each page, and invite their comments.

Exploring

Gather the children in front of the two posters: The U.N. Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Unitarian Universalist Principles. Help the children compare and talk about the similarities between the two value statements. Distribute Handout #1 and Handout #2 to all children and invite them to color their individual posters on the tables provided.

Integrating

While the children are coloring, invite your guest(s) into your classroom and introduce them to the children. Invite your guests to talk about the rights of children in this congregation and in the wider community to have three meals a day. Name the reality that some children in the community are left behind with not enough or the proper food to help them to grow healthy, strong bodies. Your guests will then talk about your congregation's monthly social service project (example: preparing a meal for a shelter or social service agency). Name the values of this project in helping children (and adults) to

receive something that everyone needs—food. Link the values of this project to our UU Principles and the Rights of the Child.

Discuss the logistics of the service project—time frame and preparation, travel to agency/shelter and intergenerational cooperation, children's rights and responsibilities. Finalize the plan and distribute the Letter to Children and Families to every child to take home with them.

Closing

Gather the children for a closing circle around the chalice. Light the chalice candle. As you refer to the Symbols of Children's Rights Handout, read the following words based on the principles of the rights of every child and the values of our Unitarian Universalist faith:

The children in the world deserve the best the world has to give no matter who our parents are, where we live, or what we believe. We need to treat all children equally.

So that all children may grow in freedom and love, we need to protect them.

Each child needs a name and a land to call home.

Every child needs shelter, food, health care, and a place to play.

Each child needs to grow in body and mind no matter what her/his ability or disability.

Every child deserves to grow up in a family.

Each child needs to learn and play in order to lead a happy and productive life.

Let us protect all children from cruelty and violence.

Let us promote freedom and love, peace and understanding throughout our community, across America, and around the world.

This is our hope for all children. Let us carry this light of love and hope with us into the future.

Sing together "Go Now In Peace"

#413 Singing the Living Tradition

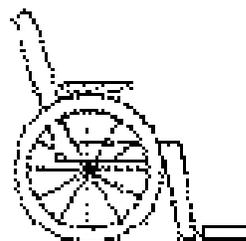
Extinguish the chalice candle and say good-bye to each child.

Handout 1

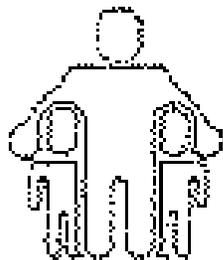
Symbols of Children's Rights



The right to affection, love, and understanding.



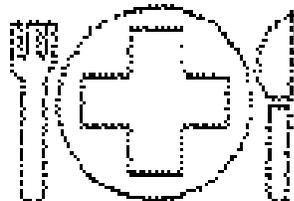
The right to special care of handicapped.



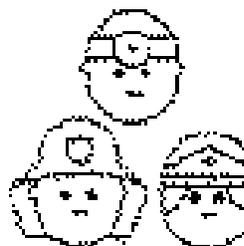
The right to protection against all forms of neglect, cruelty, and exploitation.



The right to be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster.



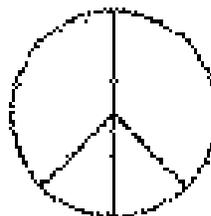
The right to adequate nutrition and medical care.



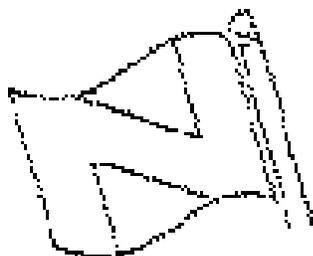
The right to have a normal member of society and to develop individual abilities.



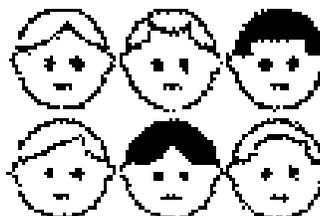
The right to free education and full opportunity for play and recreation.



The right to be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood (communism).



The right to a name and a nationality.



The right to enjoy these rights, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, or national or social origin.

Handout 2

Our Unitarian Universalist Principles

We believe

That each and every person is important

That all people should be treated fairly and kindly

That we should accept one another and keep on learning together

That each person must be free to search for what is true and right in life

That all persons should have a vote about the things that concern them

In working for a peaceful, fair, and free world

In caring for our planet earth, the home we share with all living things.

As used in *We Believe: Learning and Living Our Unitarian
Universalist Principles* (UUA, 1998)

