

## **Faith Development for Young People**

From the very beginning, the Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists have committed energy, time, resources and space to religious education, now known as “lifespans faith development.” The realization that children young, middle, and older, as well as adults of all ages both need and want a sound exploration of religious values and interconnectedness provided opportunities for creative thinking and dedicated volunteers. Even in the early days when Sunday services were offered in the library and then the elementary school, religious education always played an important part of the overall structure.

Today we have a permanent part-time *Director of Faith Development (DFD)*, a part-time *YRUU Advisor* for our teens and a *Children’s, Youth & Teens Faith Development Committee* made up of dedicated volunteers who select curricula, develop annual brochures, advise on policy matters and help guide the direction of the program. Our vision is that our children develop and nurture personal values and interconnections among themselves, our church community and the larger community. We see our children strengthening and sharing their sense of self and spirituality through our UU Principles. We are committed to providing the resources necessary to make this vision a reality.

During the summer of 2007 we enjoyed being transported abroad with the *Passport to Adventure* program. This consisted of weekly visits from different members of our congregation who came to share their experiences of countries from nearly every continent on the globe and allow the children to sample the cultures, beliefs and occasionally the foods of those distant lands.

Now that the school year and church year have begun again, our children begin most Sundays in the sanctuary before being sung out to their own programs. Middle School-aged youth and YRUU (“Young Religious Unitarian Universalists” – our high schoolers) go to Parker House (where the church offices are located) while four-year-olds through fifth graders go to Fahs House. See the “Programs” section for an overview of the curricula currently being used for each age group.

Classes are led by generous *volunteers* – some parents, some not – who commit to teaching at least a two-month block of Sundays, along with the accompanying preparation time. Our volunteer advisors are dedicated to the core concept of strong faith development for our children, youth and teens.

Periodic *teacher-training events*, under the auspices of the DFD and committee co-chairs, guide new and experienced participants. Teacher transition meetings between each of the sessions help the incoming teachers with the curriculum, students, activities and policy questions.