

UUCB RE Class Rituals

Each of our “Tapestry of Faith” curricula (the online lessons we use at UUCB) has suggestions for ritual elements in the classroom, such as lighting the chalice, checking in, singing, and closing. Because the lesson plans often offer an hour and a half worth of activities while we usually have 40 minutes at most, and because the ritual elements vary from curriculum to curriculum, consistency of the rituals can get lost in the fray. Today we are inviting each team to plan some standard ritual elements together. Ideally, these elements will provide a touchstone of consistency from week to week, and help give the RE classroom a different feel than school.

Each team is invited to come up with a pattern that works for you, but that can be consistent no matter who the lead teacher is. Start by talking about what your current pattern(s) looks like. You are the experts on your groups of kids, and you know which of the possibilities listed below will work or not with your groups.

Here is a possible pattern to consider adopting:

- Circle
- Chalice Lighting
- Singing
- Covenant
- Check-in
- Story/Activities
- Closing Circle

Circle

Starting in a circle is a really valuable way of encouraging the kids to see themselves as a community, and setting the expectation that they will listen to each other and not just the teachers. It also makes a clear distinction from many school classrooms.

Chalice Lighting

Many classes use this chalice lighting with hand gestures: “We light this chalice, symbol of Unitarian Universalism. We are the church of the open minds, helping hands, and loving hearts.” There are alternatives if this one isn’t working for you, especially for older kids. It’s ideal to have some words that are said every week by everyone, even if there are other words said as well. Another option: “We light this chalice, symbol of Unitarian Universalism. May it remind us of the divine spark in all creation. The power of love to heal what is broken. And to be grateful for life’s blessings each day.”

Singing

Singing a short and simple song each week is another good way to set the RE classroom tone. Michèle Voillequé will share some possibilities today, and has more resources available in the RE office.

Covenant

It can help keep the covenant fresh to have a moment to look at it each week. This could look like everyone reading it together, though for some that will be boring. Instead you can try having each person choose one word from it, or go around the circle and have each person read a line, or as short and simple as one kid reading one line from it each week. Our emphasis on covenant, or making agreements instead of just having rules, is another way RE classes can feel different than most school classrooms.

Check-in

The style can vary week to week, but if you choose to have one as a team, it's good to make sure it happens every week. This could take the form of a different question each week, such as: "Describe how you're doing today like a kind of weather." "Make a shape and a sound of how your week was." "If your week was a color, what color would it be?" "If someone in your family described how your week was, what would they say?" Or, it could be more get to know you questions, such as: "If you could have a super power, what would it be?" "What animal would you most like to spend a day being?" The key if you decide to include this element is to have a moment each week when every kid shares and is listened to by everyone else.

Activities/Story

With the amount of time we have, you usually only need to pick 1-3 of the activities listed in the lesson plan (there are often 5 or more). For most lessons there is one core activity that might be important to include (often a story). However, if you have other ideas, such as an activity that relates the church's spiritual theme of the month, you are welcome to bring in other material.

Closing circle

Bringing everyone back into a circle to close each week helps the kids trust in the container we are holding. This can be a short circle where everyone can just blow out the chalice together, or it can include other elements. A couple of good options would be go around and have each person say one word or one thing that stood out for them that day, to hold hands in a circle and pass the squeeze, to sing a closing song like "Go Now in Peace," or to play a short game like "Zen Counting."