

Dear high school youth and parents:

It is time to register for the 2011-2012 youth program at First Parish!

Being a youth in First Parish is not very different from being an adult. We understand that life, both generally and within the parish, comes with choices. We make choices with our time, our talents and our treasures. Like with our adult members, we ask that our youth make a commitment to maintaining a vital community at First Parish. There are numerous ways to contribute – by connecting with other members of the congregation and with other youth, serving our neighbors, exploring Unitarian Universalism, and by developing as individuals and as leaders within the church. Like adult members, each youth is able to select the path that best fits him or her. Our incoming youth director will be here to help youth navigate all their options, especially since we know that no one youth can do it all.

The attached registration form is a helpful tool in this process. You will notice that there are some options that speak of a greater commitment to those here at First Parish, while others may be one-afternoon events. But selecting various options, we hope that each youth finds a means to participate in congregational life that is meaningful to them and others.

Like with adults, youth have continually affirmed that connection and relationships are what they value most about their experiences at First Parish. Youth group and Coming of Age give more time to growing the relationships between youth that support them during difficult moments. Projects, trips, and service days bring youth together in the joy of accomplishing things together. The opportunities to serve as worship leaders allow the congregation to affirm youth in their ability to contribute meaningfully to congregational life and to others' spiritual development. I suggest that each and all of these should be given some consideration as being a valuable way for you to give your time.

To help you discern what you want to do, here are brief descriptions:

Regular offerings for youth:

- **Sunday night youth group:** a youth community space where youth bond through games, social action, and sharing their lives with one another. We focus on fun, deep conversations, service to others, listening, and authentic expression. It a place where youth can form meaningful relationships with others, even with those who are not in their normal friendship group. **Meets Sundays from 6 -8 p.m.**, except on holiday, retreat, or social action weekends. **Please note the new time!**
- **Coming of Age** (9th grade): a spiritual development program that helps ninth graders discern what it means for them personally to be a person of faith. Key elements of the program include: articulating one's values, serving others, spiritual retreats, becoming young adults in the eyes of the congregation and, most importantly, delivering credo statements at the Coming of Age Service. Generally requires one weekend activity a month, **6:30 – 8:30 p.m. – CoAers invited to “check-in” with YRUUers at 6!**
- **Coming of Age Youth Mentor** (10-12th grader): if you loved Coming of Age, and want to continue your spiritual journey, you can continue participating in Coming of Age by serving as an older peer-mentor.

- **Youth Advisory Council (YAC):** help determine the youth programming for Sunday nights, plan service days, and organize fundraisers. Gain valuable leadership skills and learn to be a valuable part of a team. 7-8 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month.
- **One-on-One mentoring:** adults provide youth the opportunity to share confidentially, and receive advice on maintaining healthy relationships, self-respect, and a balanced attitude towards school and the college selection process. This can take place in person or over the phone.

Touchstone events that occur once a year:

- **Youth Service Trip:** Taking place for 8 days over Spring Break, youth and adult chaperons form connections with each other and with the community that is hosting them. The focus is on service as a central component of our Unitarian Universalist faith and youth engagement and empowerment. Participants attend monthly 1 - 1.5 hour long planning sessions to prepare. If there is limited enrollment, preference is given to those who regularly attend youth group.
- **Fall Retreat:** Fun, social bonding time with communal meals and a youth-led vespers service. Additional opportunities for spiritual deepening provided through Coming of Age.
- **Local social action projects:** helping serve those in need in our local community through direct service and raising money and awareness.
- **Youth Fundraiser for First Parish:** demonstrate your gratitude and generosity towards First Parish by participating in a fundraiser that supports the congregation that has raised you.

Ways to Participate in Congregational Life:

- **RE teacher:** Love kids and creative projects? Volunteer to serve as an RE teacher on Sunday mornings.
- **Participating in Sunday Worship:** inspire the larger congregation by serving as a worship leader. Youth have delivered children's messages, read a chalice lighting or reading, offered a testimonial, spoken about a specific social justice concern, or even shared an original reflection. The congregation loves to hear from you!
- **Youth Gospel Choir:** Awesome music!!!! The choir performs roughly 6 times per church year, and has rehearsals on some Sunday mornings at 10 a.m.
- **Social Action Committee:** help shape the social action mission of First Parish.
- **RE Committee:** help First Parish meet its commitment to its children and youth. Youth perspectives are highly valued as you can offer a first-hand perspective on the program.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email or call Pam Howell or I. We want to you find and grow your place here at First Parish!

Blessings,

Anastassia Zinke