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**First Parish in Concord**

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# **First Parish in Concord**

## **Religious Education**

**What Every Religious Education Teacher Ought To Know...**  
A Guide to Maintaining a Safe and Nurturing Program  
For Our Children

Required reading for all teachers

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# Safety and Health

## Fire

Smoke is the most serious danger, not flames. The building sprinkler system is designed to save the structure but by the time the system is set off, the heat and smoke could well be harmful and possibly fatal.

1. The first thing to do in case of a fire is **MOVE PEOPLE OUT OF THE BUILDING CALMLY AND IN AN ORDERLY FASHION**. It is important to know where exits are and to keep exit paths clear of obstructions.
2. **STAY WITH YOUR STUDENTS AND TAKE THE ATTENDANCE LIST WITH YOU**. Each classroom has a designated emergency gathering spot outside the church. Teachers must take a head count and make sure all children in the class have been accounted for.
3. Trying to put out a fire with an extinguisher should be secondary to removing people. There are clearly marked fire extinguishers throughout the buildings.
4. All exits should remain clear of toys, boxes, etc.

There are two highly sensitive smoke detectors in the downstairs Nursery School rooms. If you are using hot plates or heat producing instruments they could trip off the alarm in the Concord Fire Station unless you are careful not to let smoke accumulate. (Open windows and doors quickly.)

## Fire Emergency Gathering Locations

Location #1: Milldam Play Yard (behind the church)  
Lower level classrooms (in the Milldam space)

Location #2: Courtyard/Lawn in front of the white houses  
RE Classrooms: Bulkeley Room, Brooks Room, Emerson Room, Ripley Room

Location #3: Main Front Lawn in front of church steps  
Wright Tavern Classrooms

Maps of emergency exit routes are posted in all classrooms.

## Chalice Lighting Precautions

Burning Chalices should be supervised at all times. After lighting the chalice and saying the chalice prayer as a group, extinguish your chalice immediately. Chalices may be lit in the Wright Tavern but please use extreme caution.

## First Aid

1. If a child is seriously injured (head or body injury), DO NOT MOVE the child. Have one adult teacher stay with the child and send a responsible messenger to the nearest land-line phone to call 911. Nearest phone locations:
  - Emerson, Ripley, ??: RE office on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor
  - Brooks or Bulkeley Rooms: main office
  - Milldam area: Milldam office
2. Bee and wasp sting allergies: Immediate response is critical. If children have severe allergies we ask parents to bring an epi-pen with them on Sunday morning (see #3 for more information). Allergy information is listed on the attendance sheets for all classes. If a child has a severe reaction (swelling, trouble breathing) then administer the epi-pen (if available) and immediately call 911. Contact parents and release the child to their care. If a child is stung and there is no allergy alert information, it is still important that you contact the parents immediately and release the child to their care since allergies can develop unexpectedly.
3. Epi-pens: Some children who are have severe allergies carry their own epi-pens (an injection that must be administered into the thigh immediately following a sting) or their parents carry them. If a child is having an allergic reaction it is important to administer the epi-pen immediately. We do not keep epi-pens at First Parish. If a child is experiencing swelling , especially of the facial area, dial 911 and then send someone to contact the parent .
4. Food allergies: First Parish provides goldfish crackers, pretzels and apple juice to younger children (toddlers through 1<sup>st</sup> grade). Snacks are not provided in the classrooms for Grades 2-7. These children may enjoy snacks at coffee hour under their parents' supervision.
5. We ask teachers of grades 2-6 to provide snacks for coffee hour. Do not provide snacks that include peanuts, nut products, melon or strawberries. Read product labels carefully.
6. Unfortunately, we cannot celebrate birthdays in the classrooms with special snacks such as cupcakes. If parents ask if they may bring a special snack please explain that due to allergies our policy is to limit classroom snacks.

## Illness

Any child who has a contagious illness should be kept at home. If teachers have any concern about the wellness of a child they should contact the RE Director.

Teachers must wear gloves while changing diapers and dispose of gloves and mats when finished.

## Child Protection and Safety

1. There must be a minimum of two adults present in the building, in RE classes, at youth group meetings and at other events or activities involving children of the church.
2. There must be no use of alcohol or illegal drugs at events planned for children.
3. All members of the First Parish community shall abide by our Code of Ethics.

## **Code of Ethics - Working with Children & Youth**

First Parish is a place of safety for all children and youth. Anyone working with children in a leadership role in any of our church programs has the social, moral and spiritual responsibility to protect the children and youth both physically and emotionally. Both volunteer and salaried staff members of the church share this responsibility.

Leaders of children and youth in this church assume the responsibility to nurture, to teach, to share in and to celebrate the spiritual and moral development of our children and youth. They make a commitment to foster a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

No leader shall engage in behavior which may be construed as physically, verbally, or emotionally abusive. NO leader shall ever engage in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children or youth. Leaders shall refrain from being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or any other drug which would impair their judgment or ability to function effectively in a leadership role with children or youth. In order to be in compliance with our Safe Congregation Guidelines, no leader should be alone with any child.

Leaders will be informed of this Code of Ethics and agree to it before assuming their roles. In cases of any violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

### Safety for Babies and Toddlers

1. Sign in and sign out: Parents must sign in and sign out babies and toddlers when they are dropped off and picked up each week.
2. Clipboards with sign-in sheets are provided to Caregiving teachers.
3. The same parent must sign the child in and out. If there is any question or concern please contact the Young Children Coordinator for Assistance.
4. Universal Precautions for Diaper Changing: For the safety of the child and the adult, teachers must practice universal precautions when changing diapers. Plastic surgical gloves and disposable changing mats are provided in the diaper kits for the Caregiving classroom.

### Sunday School Dismissal

1. Children in third grade and younger must be picked up by their parents/guardians or someone designated by them.
2. Teachers must stay with the children in third grade and younger until they are picked-up.
3. If parents are late, teachers should ask the RE Director or Young Children Coordinator for assistance.
4. Children in fourth grade and above are dismissed to the coffee hour to meet their parents. See the “Safety for Babies and Toddlers” section above for dismissal information for that age group.

## Field Trips

1. Parents must sign permission slips when children and teens are leaving the church premises. Emergency information forms are also required for overnight visits or retreats. The leaders must take along the signed forms as well as a class list, which includes parents’ names and phone numbers.
2. In case of emergency, the parents’ medical release (on the Field Trip Permission Form) must be shown to hospital personnel before treatment.
3. A First Aid Kit must be taken on field trips.
4. There must be a minimum of two adults with the group.
5. Drivers must have a valid driver’s license, be of legal age to drive minors, and be covered by auto insurance.
6. Children under the age of five or any child who weighs less than 40 lbs must ride in a child safety seat.
7. Seat belts must be provided for every child
8. No child under twelve shall ride in the front seat of a car equipped with an air bag.
9. There must be no use of alcohol or illegal drugs on field trips.

## Overnights

1. All over nights must be arranged with the RE Director or the Youth Director prior to sending out any invitation to the children in your group.
2. Adult supervision must be present at all times.
3. A First Aid Kit must be taken on any overnight or retreat.
4. A class list with parents’ names and phone numbers must also be taken.
5. The children must meet with the adults at the beginning of the overnight and must be informed of the overnight ground rules before activities begin.
6. The Sanctuary and Chapel may only be used as places of worship. It is important to teach our children respect for these spaces as places that have personal and sacred meaning for our congregation.

7. Please discuss any plans you may have for the Sanctuary or Chapel with the RE Director.
8. No food or running games are allowed in the Sanctuary.
9. The organ is not to be touched by anyone – adults or children.
10. The Parish Hall may be used as a place for fun and games. Please remember, though, that it is not a gym. There are precious paintings and furnishings. Have fun, but be careful.
11. Offices, Milldam Nursery School space and the Herb Garden are off-limits unless otherwise arranged with the Sexton.
12. To be in compliance with our Safe Congregation Guidelines, two adults must be present at all times when working with youth.

## **Other Essential Information**

### Attendance

Each Sunday Teachers should pick-up attendance clipboards/folders for their designated class. You must take the attendance list with you in case of a fire.

Attendance is very important to us, because we use the information to plan materials and space needs for our programs. If you have any questions about taking attendance, please contact the RE office.

Visitors: Please note the names and phone numbers of any children who are not registered. Registration forms are available in the RE office. After three visits we will follow-up with the child's family.

Please return attendance clipboards/folders to the RE box for your grade.

### Discipline and Classroom Management

Our job is to make children feel welcome when they arrive and have the room and curriculum as motivating as possible, but sometimes conflict and disruptive behavior happens. Prevention is everything. Here are some tips:

**Create a covenant (a promise list):** Agree on a list of rules that will make the class a pleasant experience for everyone.

**Foster a sense of community:** Know everyone's name and use it often; praise the group; let the children know you know their parents; offer choices when possible.

**Take active steps when there is a problem:**

- 1) Sit next to a child who needs more limits; separate children who distract each other.
- 2) Use verbal reminders about the rules; try to engage the disruptive child in a positive activity such as helping the teacher.
- 3) If a student continues to be disruptive, one RE teacher may take the child into the hall for a quiet moment. The child may return when collected.

- 4) It is very important that you let the DRE know when a child is having difficulty in the classroom. She will help you explore with the parents how to best enable the child to have a positive experience.

## Evaluations

Please complete the evaluation forms that are in your curriculum binders for each week's lesson. They are the best source of information for future teachers and the RE staff to know how well a lesson works.

## Kitchen Use

If you plan to use the kitchen area and/or ovens please let Doug Baker know during the week.

## Library

The RE library is located in the hallway between the Brooks and Bulkeley rooms. The books are sorted by category. Please feel free to use any of the many books in our collection as resources for teaching. If you take a book off-site please let us know; there is a "sign-out" form on a clipboard on the bookshelf.

## Messy Projects

In order to keep our new classrooms in excellent condition, please cover all tables and floors for projects, including art and baking. Tarps are available in the RE closet (2<sup>nd</sup> floor). Please clean up all materials when you are done.

## Milldam Space

If your classroom is on the lower level, please be respectful of the Milldam Nursery School's space. Please use only First Parish RE supplies and return all toys, books and puzzles to their places on the shelf.

## Name Tags

Each class has an envelope with permanent pin-on name tags or name labels (grades 2-6). If your class has pin-on name tags please remind the children to take the name tags off at the end of each class.

## Sermons and Orders of Service

Copies of previous week's sermons, the current order of service and the Sunday News can be found online at [www.firstparish.org](http://www.firstparish.org). A limited number are printed and available on the table in front of the main office. Audio CDs are available in the main office and are a great way to experience the whole service.

## Snacks

The church provides snacks for toddlers through preschoolers only. Teachers of grades Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade are asked to bring a snack each week for coffee hour. Please bring enough for the number of children in your class and leave it on the counter in the kitchen; please label it "RE snacks." Drinks are welcome but not required.

Please avoid snacks with nuts or nut oils. For a list of suggested safe snacks see the RE office.

## Special Concerns and Children with Special Needs

When children have special needs we depend on the parents to tell us. We will pass on any relevant information to the classroom teachers, but we encourage parents to speak directly to the teachers. Teachers should feel comfortable to talk directly with parents or ask the RE Director to help.

You can be fair without treating everyone the same. Be flexible and ready to change strategy if needed. Teachers should not hesitate to let us know if any of the children are having difficulties in RE. We really need to know so that we can help the children and their families.

## Special Equipment

Please let us know if you need your room set-up in a special way or if you want the DVD player, slide projector or other equipment by Wednesday before the Sunday needed.

## Substitutes

You are responsible for finding your own substitutes if you are unable to teach on a given Sunday. When you need a substitute try the following strategies:

1. Call a person who teaches the same grade/class during a different term
2. Call a person who teaches your class during the other service (9:00 vs. 11:00)
3. Call a parent from your class list

Please don't wait until the last minute. If an emergency comes up on a Sunday morning please call the Church and leave a message for us in the main office. We do not normally check voice mail on Sunday mornings.

## Supplies

Every effort will be made to have the supplies you need available to you on Sunday morning. The RE Closet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor contains most basic materials. If there are any specific supplies you need please let us know by Wednesday of the prior week.

We will reimburse you for any supplies you buy on your own, but please check with us before purchasing any items. We have a large supply of "stuff" in the attic and may have what you are looking for.

When gathering supplies from the RE closet please remember that many classes use the same materials. Please take what you need and leave the rest behind. If we are running low on an item please notify the RE Administrator.

## **Our Unitarian Universalist Principles**

*(in words for children)*

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.

## **Our Chalice Lighting Prayer**

We are Unitarian Universalists  
With minds that think,  
Hearts that love  
And hands that are ready to serve.

## **Our Benediction**

Go out into the world in peace  
Have courage  
Hold on to what is good  
Return to no person evil for evil  
Strengthen the fainthearted  
Support the weak  
Help the suffering  
Honor all beings