

# Religious Exploration

FAITH FORMATION AT NESHOPA UU CHURCH



## A Year of Joy

2024-2025

## A Year of Joy: Practicing Liberating Love

Welcome to the 2024-2025 year of Religious Exploration at Neshoba Church. Our lifespan faith development programming offers participants the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the world around them through thoughtful conversations, creative experiences, and spiritual practices.

Following our UU theology of love, we recognize the inherent dignity and worth of every person AND understand that we are part of the interdependent web of life. It is here where you have the opportunity to be messy, to be playful, and to wonder. To be open to learning, along-side others of all ages, can help move us more deeply into our hearts and bring us balance. And through reflective action, we can help change ourselves and bring peace to our world.

This year's overarching frame is **The Practices of Our Faith**. Utilizing our Soul Matters program and other curricula this year, we will explore how Unitarian Universalism is a lived faith that inspires us to act, live, and love our values out in the world. Or to put it another way, we're diving into our long-loved commitment to "deeds not creeds." Our overarching frame is also a way for us to connect to our new UU core value of Liberating Love, with each of our monthly themes framed as a practice that help us embody liberating love in our daily lives.

We invite you and your family to engage with the curricula this year as a joyful, imaginative, celebration of life. You belong here!

In faith and hope, Rev. Sarah Osborne  
Director of Religious Exploration

# Carrying the Flame



## SEVEN PRINCIPLES

The Rainbow Path Promises, in child friendly language

- \* Respect all people (Red Promise)
- \* Offer kind and fair treatment to all (Orange Promise)
- \* Yearn to accept and learn about ourselves and others (Yellow Promise)
- \* Grow by exploring what is true and right (Green Promise)
- \* Believe in our ideas and Act on the (Blue Promise)
- \* Insist on freedom, justice, and peaceful for all people (Indigo Promise)
- \* Value our home, Earth, that we share with all living beings (Violet Promise)

## Values of Unitarian Universalism

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**Justice:** We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all thrive.

**Equity:** We declare that every person has the right to flourish with inherent dignity and worthiness.

**Transformation:** We adapt to the changing world.

**Pluralism:** We celebrate that we are all sacred beings, diverse in culture, experience, and theology.

**Interdependence:** We honor the interdependent web of all existence. With reverence for the great web of life and with humility, we acknowledge our place in it.

**Generosity:** We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope.





# You are important here!



## Our Covenant

FOR FAITH FORMATION & RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION

We covenant to support our entire community in all our diversity, in their spiritual journeys by offering information, joyful experiences, life examples, and thoughtful discussion of our Unitarian Universalist Principles. We promise to promote a safe, considerate, and enjoyable community with friends, family, and trusted advisors, to stimulate natural curiosity, enthusiasm for listening and learning, and a desire to serve others.

## Resources for UU

Please let us know how we can support your family's faith formation Here are some ways to stay up-to-date on the latest opportunities and resources at Neshoba:  
 Sign up for our monthly newsletter and weekly email, Visit Neshoba Church's website, Facebook page and fellowship group, and Pinterest page & Tapestry of Faith Unitarian Universalist curriculum (free): [www.uua.org/re/tapestry/](http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/)

## Parents are the primary religious facilitators

To help your children benefit the most from their religious exploration experiences at Neshoba Church, we recommend the following:

Be consistent with your attendance. Help them get online to Zoom. Check the weekly email for weekly updates. Familiarity is basic to a sense of belonging and ownership. A child's comfort level and relationship to the community is enhanced with regular "presence" in the program.

Model excitement and enthusiasm for the church experience. If you show that church is important to you, your child will learn this too.

Practice rituals at home to strengthen the continuity of the program. Light a family chalice daily, share joys and concerns, sing hymns periodically. Watch online worship together.

## Safety Policy for Children & Youth

Our congregation takes seriously the responsibility of assuring the safety of our children and youth. Our facilitators & helpers, nursery caregivers, and any paid or volunteer staff complete a background check, participate in training & conversations with the DRE, and receive a copy of our RE policy manual before serving in the program. You may view our Child Safety Policy on the church website. **Please note that parents/caregivers are responsible for their child's well-being at the church, outside of the RE class times.**

It is the goal of the RE Program that every child/youth feels welcome and respected. If a child/youth has difficulty meeting the behavioral expectations of the congregation we welcome any input from parents regarding ways we can assist the child/youth in finding a successful solution.

## Accommodations

We welcome all children into our program as all children are spiritual beings. Some need more attention, personal space, or understanding because of their particular circumstances. Specific support may be needed to make their RE experience successful. The RE program will make every effort to accommodate children in their classes. Please let us know your child's needs so that we can help them have a successful experience in our program. It is our intention to support each child/youth as a part of our family.

## Right Relationship Plan

Children and youth are expected to behave in a manner that encourages cooperation, responsibility, and respect for themselves and others. Our program includes a plan for right relationship, focused on behavior that is respectful and in alignment with one another. If behaviors are out of right relationship, we have steps to help a child and youth begin again with love. We believe in and support the freedom to make choices. In those rare instances, if a children/youth finds it a challenge to behave in a manner conducive to our program, the following steps will be taken:

- If a child/youth is disruptive during RE, a guide will attempt to first redirect the child/youth's attention.
- If this does not have the desired behavioral impact, the guide will issue a direct warning to stop the behavior.
- If this does not have the desired behavioral impact, the child/youth will be escorted from the classroom/activity and he/she will be brought to the DRE, or their substitute, to discuss the issue.
- The DRE will talk with the child/youth about his/her behavior and try to work out a reasonable way in which the child/youth can return to the class/program and continue learning alongside others in a positive manner.
- In the event the disruptive behavior continues the child/youth will be brought to their parent/guardian.
- The parent/guardian will have the option of keeping their child/youth with them for the remainder of the service/event or the parent and child/youth may return to the classroom/activity together for the remainder of the program time as appropriate.



# Meet the Family Ministry Team



Love Radically.  
Serve Gratefully.  
Wonder Daily.  
~ Unitarian Universalism



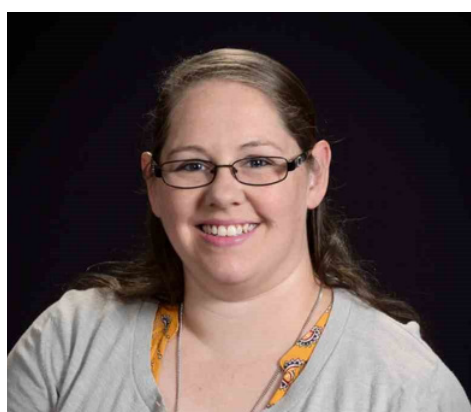
**Rev. Beth Lefever**  
Minister



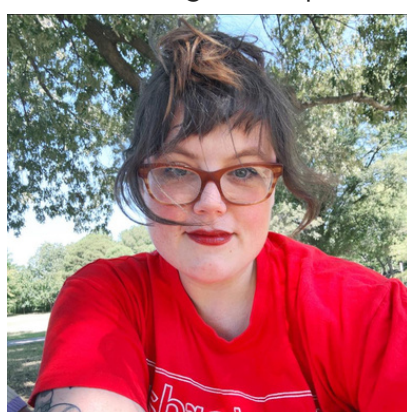
**Rev. Sarah Osborne**  
Director of Religious Exploration



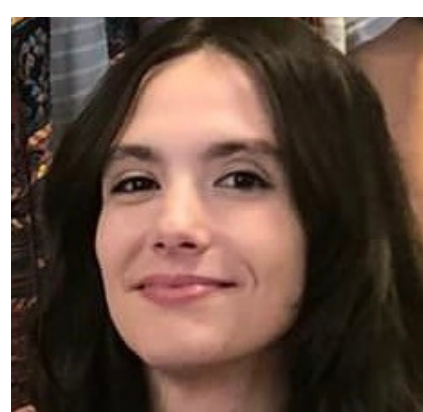
**Tom Adams**  
Youth Advisor



**Niks Hill**  
RE & Nursery Support Coordinator



**Neely Van Dorp Vaughn**  
Elementary Facilitator



**Kaitlyn "Kat" Roth**  
Elementary Facilitator

For more information about our programs, please contact  
Rev. Sarah Osborne at [dre@neshobauu.org](mailto:dre@neshobauu.org)

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## Soulful Home

Niks Hill will be curating and facilitating Soulful Home, which supports families to find the sacred in everyday life. Following monthly themes, Soulful Home content will be sent out monthly and cover a wide variety of activities, including The Welcome Mat, At the Table, Around the Neighborhood, From the Mailbox, At Play, At the Bedside, At the Kitchen Sink, and more.



## Soul Matters Children

This year's overarching frame is A Year of Joy: Practices of Our Faith. Our overarching frame is also a way for us to connect to our new UU core value of Liberating Love, with each of our monthly themes framed as a practice that helps us embody liberating love in our daily lives.

Each month, our Children's RE teachers, Ms. Kat and Ms. Neely, will lead the elementary age children through explorations of these themes: Invitation, Deep Listening, Repair, Presence, Story, Inclusion, Trust, Joy, Imagination, Freedom

Children's RE is for Ages 5-12



## Fifth Dimension

The Fifth Dimension uses episodes of The Twilight Zone as the basis for in-depth discussions of a wide variety of topics. At each class, an entire episode is viewed, a distinct advantage when discussion is the intention. After viewing, the class engages in discussion and activities, designed to encourage deep contemplation of issues.

Tom Adams will lead the youth through this program, for ages 13-18

## Adult RE: Soul Matters & Fifth Dimension

From 10-10:55am, on Sundays our adult RE program will offer rich volunteer-led conversations on a variety of topics from our Soul Matters & 5th Dimension curriculums. For more information, check out the weekly Neshoba Connections email and Facebook page and fellowship group.