

Coming of Age Ceremony

Jim FitzGerald

Overview

One of the happenings that makes this Sunday so special is that we have the chance to formally begin our Coming of Age program.

This one year program will bring nine 7th-9th graders on a journey that will explore a significant number of religious communities and various Unitarian Universalist faith expressions. Coming of Age students will engage in a community service project, participate in an overnight retreat, and conclude their experience with the creation and sharing of their personal credo statement on Coming of Age Sunday, May 31, 2009.

One of the most important aspects to this program is the relationship between Coming of Age youth and their mentors.

This morning each Coming of Age youngster will be paired with a congregation member who has agreed to serve as their mentor. Mentors and mentees will meet on a regular basis throughout the Coming of Age experience to engage in conversations about life, spirituality, future goals, God, the afterlife, personal interests, and the events of everyday life.

Mentors and Coming of Age students will be guided by four loving and competent facilitators – Rena Karp, Suzanne Jackisch, Annie Spang, and Mark Tosi.

While the Coming of Age facilitators and I will take the lead on this program, everyone here at First Parish is expected to play a role in supporting our youth throughout this experience.

Introduction of COA participants and their mentors

At this time, we'll formally pair up our Coming of Age students with their mentors in a simple ritual that symbolizes the sharing of enlightenment that will occur between them over the next 7-8 months.

When I call the name of our Coming of Age student followed by the name of his/her mentor, both are invited to come to the pulpit. Gold candles will be offered to the mentor. White candles will be offered to the student. When each has received the candle, the mentor and mentee will approach the chalice and light their candles together at the same time. Once the mentor and mentee have lit their candles, they're invited to stand on the side opposite the pulpit until all mentors and mentees have finished.

Understanding that work and personal schedules would likely prevent all mentors and mentees from participating this morning, Coming of Age facilitators will stand in for absent mentors and parents of youngsters will stand in for absent youth.

Melissa Alves

Julia Cowen

Adrian Dunne

Brodie Jackisch

Sarah Karp

Sasha Nakashima

Arianna Tosi

Isabelle Dunne

Emily Dormitzer

Sine Pounder

Susan Etkind

Steve Brown (Mark Tosi standing in for Steve Brown)

Mike Nakashima

Shirley Wallace

Jack Martin

Linda Fechter

Susan Hobson

Amy Martin (Susan Hobson standing in for Emily)

Dedication of Youth and Mentors by Congregation

All are invited to extend your right hand forward as you are able and repeat each line after it is spoken:

May this journey embolden your senses.
May you see the rainbow of perspectives.
May you smell the fresh air that is discovery.
May you feel compassion and understanding towards others.
May you taste from the banquet of justice.
May you touch the core of your spirit.
Amen.

[Mentors and mentees are invited to extinguish their candles, place them back in the basket, and return to their places]