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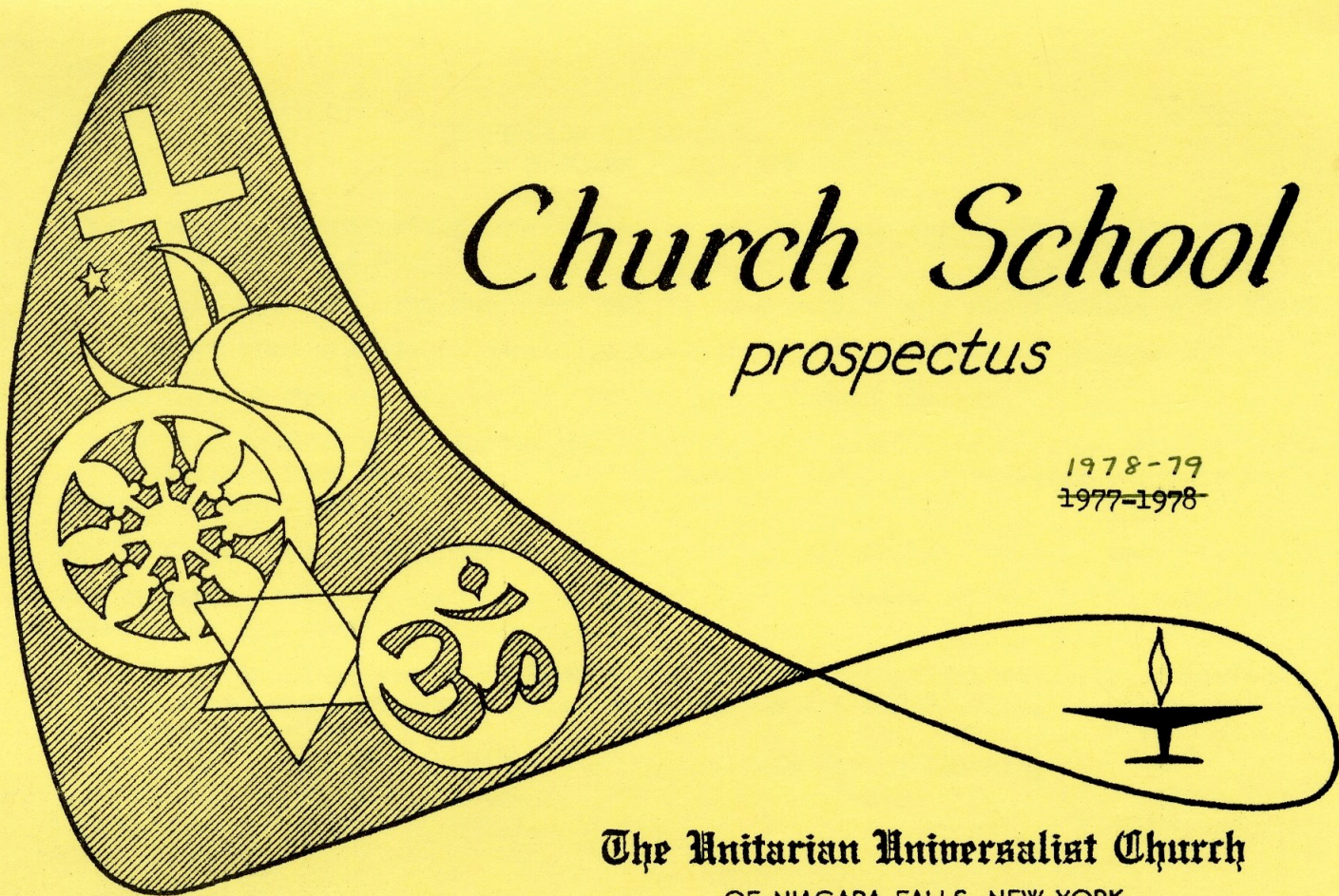
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Church School

prospectus

1978-79
~~1977-1978~~



The Unitarian Universalist Church
OF NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH
OF NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK

"The great end in religious instruction is not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own;
not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;
not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth;
not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs;
not to bind them by ineradicable prejudices to our particular sect or peculiar notions, but to prepare them for impartial, conscientious judging of whatever subjects may be offered to their decision;
not to burden the memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought;
not to impose religion upon them in the form of arbitrary rules, but to awaken the conscience, the moral discernment.

In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul; to bring understanding, conscience, and heart into earnest, vigorous action on religious and moral truth, to excite and cherish spiritual life."

-William Ellery Channing
(1780 - 1842)

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Since our fellowship is based on the freedom of belief, the Unitarian Universalist approach to religious education must be different from that of orthodox Christianity. As the great Unitarian William Ellery Channing so eloquently indicated over 150 years ago, our task is not to stamp upon our children's minds a particular set of absolute values, but it is to encourage our children to form their own honest and reasonable faith - a faith which will include both "secular" and "religious" elements that need not be radically changed (or discarded) as they reach maturity. More specifically, we hope to help our children develop:

- Respect and reverence for life in all its aspects, including death;
- Respect for themselves and others; ethical concepts based on love, creativity, and freedom of spirit rather than fear; and an opportunity to grow in an atmosphere of warmth and acceptance;
- Respect for all attempts to arrive at religious truths and experiences, however different from our own;
- Appreciation for, and knowledge of, our own liberal religious faith, and understanding of the other religious traditions of our country and of the world.

We feel that an environment which encourages freedom of inquiry and discussion - with opportunities for creative activities as well as input from the various religious traditions of the world - is best suited to the realization of these objectives.

PARENTS

The real teachers of religion are the parents. Our program can only hope to supplement parental guidance and enrich the child's awareness and sensitivity to a variety of religious, interpersonal, ethical, and cultural concerns.

We urge parents to take an active interest in their child's classes and, since ours is a cooperative church school with a totally volunteer staff, we urge parents to help out if called upon. We also urge parents to bring their children as regularly as possible. Church may not require much regularity but the Church School does.

Children new to the Church School are invited to check with our Religious Education Director for placement in the appropriate class.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Nursery (Infant - Kindergarten)

While we do not offer a regular curriculum for these children, we are interested in them. Stories, free play and music will be provided for the children. We want their first experiences with the church to be warm and pleasant ones. Pursuant to this end, we ask parents to remain with their children until they are reasonably assured of their child's comfortableness in the Nursery. Also, parents should be available in an emergency.

Primary (1st - 3rd Grades)

"Many religious liberals want their children to have a sense of the religious traditions out beyond Unitarian Universalism; but they want the growing child to remain psychologically and spiritually alive, aware and open; and they want their church to help their children grow as valuing persons." Well, one of our UU congregations has developed such a curriculum, so this is what we'll use to start the year out. It's called: "Images For Our Lives, Judeo-Christian Heritage; Year 1."

After Christmas this class will move into a unique story-telling curriculum designed to exemplify the human capacity to respond to others (and to life's challenges) "with an understanding heart." The stories are taken from both the Judeo-Christian and North American folk traditions.

Intermediate (4th - 6th grades)

"Why Do Bad Things Happen?" is the name of a fascinating new year-long curriculum which seeks to explore that very question. In the process of this exploration, answers from various religious and secular traditions will be surveyed. As always, each child will be encouraged to think deeply and clearly for him/herself.

Junior Liberal Religious Youth (7th - 9th grades)

The Junior LRY class will explore Unitarian Universalism this year, both in terms of its colorful past and its sometimes confusing present.

Because these years are especially important for one's religious development, in addition to the regular class during church, our minister will also meet periodically with this class on certain Sunday afternoons.

Present plans for this class tentatively call for a special recognition or graduation ceremony in June, a kind of UU Bar Bas Mitzvah.

THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The R. E. Committee is composed of six persons, each elected by the congregation for a period of two years. It is your responsibility, with the minister, to develop and maintain a quality religious education program for the youth of the church.

All of our R. E. Committee members, teachers, and our R. E. Director are volunteers serving without pay.

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