

Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society

The Child Dedication Ceremony

by Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, M.Div., M.A.

Let us tend our children's spirits well, so that . . .

they may ever grow with the upward thrust of life.

Parents often come to Unitarian Universalism by way of their children. They come to our congregations looking for ways to help their child develop a strong moral character, rooted in love and acceptance of others, able to guide them as they grow and face life's challenges. Those parents who become members of this covenantal congregation, seek not a community that will tell their children what to believe, but, a community that will help their children develop a resilient spirit that will steady and guide them throughout life. In this faith community we offer our children experiences where they can explore, in safety, the meaning and purpose of different religious, spiritual, and human values. We believe that, with support, we are each capable of discerning for ourselves those life values that bring health and wholeness. Parents may come seeking answers for their children and, in the process, often find support for their own spiritual journey.

Welcoming a child into a community has been an ancient ritual observed by many cultures and faith traditions for millennia. As members of this religious community, parents and their children are warmly invited to participate with the congregation in a Child Dedication Ceremony. This ceremony celebrates:

- the individuality of the child (often including recognition of the child's name),¹
- the parent's commitment to and dreams for their child(ren), and,
- the congregation's dedication of itself to assist in nurturing the child's physical, ethical and spiritual development.

Given that the most distinctive aspect of a Unitarian Universalist Child Dedication Ceremony is that a specific congregation dedicates itself to the child's growth and their family, it may be performed more than once, such as when a parent(s) and their child(ren) join a new Unitarian Universalist congregation. The ceremony is conducted with infants, pre-school children, and older children. Young adults are encouraged to join the congregation as adult members. Typically, the Child Dedication Ceremony occurs once a year during the course of a typical Sunday Worship Service.

As the spirit moves, please contact Rev. Jeanne Lloyd to discuss the possibility of scheduling a Child Dedication Ceremony for your child.

¹ For children of parents who are not members of the congregation, a private naming ceremony affirms the dignity of the child and the commitment of the parents, family and friends to that child.

It Matters What We Believe by Sophia Lyon Fahs

Some beliefs are like walled gardens.

They encourage exclusiveness, and the feeling of being especially privileged.

Other beliefs are expansive and lead the way into wider and deeper sympathies.

Some beliefs are like shadows, clouding children's days and fears of unknown calamities.

Other beliefs are like sunshine, blessing children with the warmth of happiness.

Some beliefs are divisive, separating saved from unsaved, friends from enemies.

***Other beliefs are bonds in a world community,
where sincere differences beautify the pattern.***

Some beliefs are like blinders, shutting off the power to choose one's own direction.

Other beliefs are like gateways opening wide vistas for exploration.

Some beliefs weaken a person's selfhood. They blight the growth of resourcefulness.

Other beliefs nurture self-confidence and enrich the feeling of personal worth.

Some beliefs are rigid, like the body of death, impotent in a changing world.

***Other beliefs are pliable, like the young sapling, ever growing
with the upward thrust of life.***

Additional Sources:

Herndon, Anne. **Raising a UU Child.** Available from Rev. Lloyd.

Holst, Mary-Ella. **We Dedicate this Child.** Available from Rev. Lloyd.

Peebles, Linda Olson. **We Dedicate This Child.** <https://www.uuabookstore.org/Assets/PDFs/3559.pdf>
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