

## Coming-of-Age

A highly regarded ceremony is “Coming-of-Age”, the Unitarian Universalist tradition for recognizing our teenage youth as they are becoming adults. This is a wonderful celebration that ends a year of participating in a very comprehensive “coming-of-age” program. The goal for this program is for the youth to explore and define their self-identity as UUs. This includes, but is not limited, to actively participating in discussions about deep theological questions; developing a close relationship with a First Parish mentor; exploring Social Action work; and being involved in meaningful worship. A program highlight is the presentation of personal credos and the invitation to become a junior member of the church during the Coming-of-Age ceremony.



## Bridging Ceremony

Another recognition ceremony is in honor of our high school graduates. Our youth walk a ceremonial bridge into adulthood and we present them with a congratulatory gift. It’s an important time to affirm our love and commitment to our youth as they take a significant step out into the world.



## UU Families

A child’s experience at First Parish is just one aspect of his or her religious development. While every child will participate in enriching and meaningful programs here, it is at home where the spiritual development of each child will blossom. We encourage parents to support their children in all efforts to bring their religious education experience home with them. Whether it is adding a prayer to your dinner ritual, having honest conversations about your child’s religious questions, or sharing an act of kindness for a neighbor, there are many great ways to bring the Unitarian Universalist faith into our homes and daily lives. The Rev. Dr. Marjorie Matty or Roberta Altamari (our Director of Lifespan Religious Education) would be happy to explore any of these rite-of-passage and bringing-rituals-home topics more with you. **Contact us at 978-443-2043 or [www.fpsudbury.org](http://www.fpsudbury.org).**

## First Parish of Sudbury Unitarian Universalist

[www.fpsudbury.org](http://www.fpsudbury.org)

978-443-2043

327 Concord Rd. Sudbury



## Rite-of-passage Ceremonies



We are proud to recognize special milestones in young people’s lives. These are the wonderful “rite-of-passage” ceremonies we honor at First Parish of Sudbury.



### *Child Dedication*

From earliest times, parents have brought children to houses of worship for special ceremonies of welcome. In the presence of family and friends, the name of the child is spoken and both the parents and congregation acknowledge their responsibility for caring for and protecting the children. Most Unitarian Universalists do not use the term "baptism" because of its association with traditional Christian doctrines. Also rarely used is the term "christening", which means to make Christian. Many congregations call the ritual a "naming ceremony", or most frequently a "child dedication". Elements in the service include the use of water as the source of life, and a flower as the symbol of the powers of life to grow and renew. While most commonly performed for infants, older children and even adults are welcome to be dedicated into the faith. This ceremony is most frequently conducted during a regular worship service, but a private celebration can be scheduled. When Unitarian Universalist congregations dedicate a new life, we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of that person, and his/her potential for making a difference in the world.



### *First Chalice*

One rite-of-passage is the "first chalice ceremony" in recognition of the fact that our 8-year-olds are entering the stage some developmental experts call the "age of reason". We publicly recognize that these children are starting to think for themselves and will begin finding themselves in more situations in which they have to make choices based on what they think is right and wrong. The children have a homework assignment and group gathering that includes defining "for themselves" the words we use frequently at First Parish (such as peace, love, equality, etc). We also invite them to talk about someone they think is "courageously loving" and ask if there was a time when they did something courageously loving. Then we consider strategies that might help guide them in thinking for themselves about right and wrong when making decisions. The children join us at Youth Sunday where they are presented with personal-sized chalices, the UU symbol of our freedom to seek out and follow our own religious truths.



### *First Mentor*

Another Youth Sunday rite-of-passage is a ceremony for our youth who are about 11-years-old. We recognize the significant steps they are making as they become more independent members of both our world and our religious community. We want to acknowledge them as they step into this new stage of increasing freedom and responsibility. We wish to complement the loving relationships our youth have with their families and offer them friendship with other adults who share similar values. To do this, we invite each of the youth to select a "First Parish friend" symbolic of their ability to create their own relationships with adults at First Parish. Each youth and adult friend will meet to talk about why it's important to be UU in today's world and to work together on a small "community service" project. This relationship will be a simplified vision of the "mentor" relationship that they will later have in the Coming-of-Age program. During the Youth Sunday service, these mentors will introduce the youth to the community and offer special words in honor of the youth. The mentors will present the youth with a small gift from First Parish that symbolizes our ongoing affirmation and support for them.