



## Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church

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# UUA DRE Settlement System Questionnaire

Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church (BAUUC) is seeking a Director of Lifespan Religious Education (DLRE) who must possess or pursue UUA credentialing as a professional religious educator. As part of our search, we are using the UUA's DRE Settlement System which requires the church to complete a detailed questionnaire. Our response to those questions is posted here for the benefit of all applicants and interested parties, regardless of current standing with the UUA's RE credentialing office.

## Congregational Background and History

### Congregational Statistics:

Average Sunday Attendance: 260  
Children's Enrollment: 93  
Average Children's Attendance: 60  
Youth Enrollment: 17  
Average Youth Attendance: 10  
RE program budget current fiscal year: \$8500  
RE program budget previous fiscal year: \$6560  
Number of Sunday services: 2  
Number of Sunday RE sessions: 2  
Number of other sessions during the week: 2  
Months per year church at full operating capacity: 12  
APF contribution: \$16,408  
Fair share congregation: Yes

### Describe the surrounding community.

Houston is a city on the leading edge of diversity in the United States. Often called the biggest small town you'll ever live in, it is the fourth largest metropolitan area in the country with approximately 5 million residents. Harris County has no racial majority, which is the estimate for the nation's population by 2050. Our church is adjacent to NASA's Johnson Space Center in southeast Houston. We are 20 miles from downtown Houston and 30 miles from Galveston Island and the Gulf of Mexico. Kiplinger Magazine recently rated Houston as the #1 Best City to Live, Work, and Play.

### How and when was the congregation was founded?

Bay Area Unitarian Fellowship was formed in 1965 as part of the UUA fellowship movement led by Monroe Husbands. Ten friends began meeting in homes, local churches and community colleges in nearby Pasadena (two of the charter members are still with the church), and in 1966 the fellowship became a member congregation of the UUA. In 1972, with only 25 members, we purchased land and built our first building on Red Bluff Road in Pasadena. In 1985 we purchased our current property. Seven years later under the leadership of our first full-time settled minister (and now Minister Emerita), Rev. Dr. Leonora Montgomery, we opened our current building with just over 100 members. In 1998, we changed our name to Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church (BAUUC). Our current minister, Rev. Dr.

Matt Tittle, joined us in 2004. As a growing congregation of nearly 300, we expanded our building in 2008 to include a new religious education wing, fellowship hall and office space. BAUUC was recently awarded a grant to become the first distance-learning center in the Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Conference, and Phase-Two of our Master Plan includes the addition of a new 400-seat sanctuary.

**Note the three or four most important events in the congregation's history.**

1989 – Calling our first full-time minister, Rev. Dr. Leonora Montgomery

1992 – Opening our current building on El Camino Real

2007 – Retirement of Brenda Cockrell after 16 years as DRE (now DRE Emerita)

2008 – Dedicating our building expansion

**What is the congregation's mission?**

Our mission and vision statements were adopted in January 2005.

Our Mission: The mission of Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church is to improve our community and our world by: encouraging spiritual growth in a diverse congregation which respects the free and responsible expression of ideas; covenanting compassionate fellowship; providing a joyful environment that nurtures creativity; collaborating with others to promote our values; providing a vibrant life span program; and promoting environmentally sustainable practices.

Our Vision: The vision of our church is to be a vibrant liberal religious home respecting all people and advocating our principles in the community and the world.

**Provide a profile of the DRE you seek.**

The members of Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church consistently rank religious education as a top priority - evidenced by our recent capital campaign to fund the addition of a Religious Education wing. We recognize the importance of a robust RE program to attract and serve young families looking for their first church home *and* life-long UU's continuing to explore their faith. Our DLRE should know that we support this church so that our children will have a safe environment to explore and articulate their beliefs and learn UU principles to guide their relationships with the greater community. Our DLRE should also know that we value religious education as a life-long process which deepens our spiritual awareness through many stages of life.

We seek a DLRE to take the vibrant RE program we have today, give it renewed vision and lead it into the future, striving to keep our congregation on the leading edge of Unitarian Universalist thought. The DLRE should be familiar with the latest UU curricula, teaching methods and resources. The DLRE must have a broad knowledge of and commitment to UU principles and philosophies, but be willing to seek out networks and connections beyond our denomination.

Our DLRE should value professional growth and be active in regional and national associations for religious educators. We consider the administration of our RE program to be a professional position, and if not credentialed, we expect our DLRE to pursue credentialing through the UUA Religious Education Credentialing Program. BAUUC provides programming for all ages facilitated and taught by dedicated volunteers. We need a DLRE who can recruit and nurture volunteer faculty, promote and track participation in RE classes and support our volunteers as they carry out the program's mission. The DLRE also needs the administrative skills to supervise the staff Youth Director and paid childcare providers.

BAUUC was recently awarded a grant to become the first distance-learning center in our District. Our DLRE will be involved in coordinating the facilities, allowing our church to host special events and speakers and to deliver these programs to other UUA churches. While this provides a much needed service to the District, it will also provide our congregation with greater exposure to leading UU thinkers and educators drawn to BAUUC by these events. We need a DLRE who can identify these opportunities and promote them to the congregation as a means for spiritual growth and education. Our DLRE will need the technical literacy to envision new outreach opportunities afforded by this distance-learning infrastructure and find creative ways to use online social networking tools to engage the community.

Our members expect much from the Religious Education program. Therefore we are also dedicated to providing our program with capable volunteers, supportive staff and excellent facilities. We seek a DLRE who matches that dedication and provides leadership and vision for a dynamic program to meet the challenges of spiritual growth in our thriving church community.

**Provide a profile of your congregation.**

Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church is a progressive congregation with passions for social justice, quality worship, religious education and fellowship. We are a congregation that began as a small fellowship and have retained charter members. But now we are a program-sized congregation, intentionally growing in numbers and presence. We became a UUA Green Sanctuary in 2005, a Welcoming Congregation in 2006 and were a pilot JUUST Change Congregation in 2006. We have been nominated multiple times by the Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Conference as a UUA Breakthrough Congregation.

We are a diverse group, and our members represent a variety of theological, political, educational and economic backgrounds. Our congregation ranges in age from newborn to 90+ years old, with an average in the late 40's - young compared to many congregations. Many of our families have children and grandchildren active in the RE program. Roughly 50% of the congregation has a connection to NASA and nearby Johnson Space Center, while another 25-30% are associated with the energy industry. We have a number of educators and the usual distribution of other vocations.

Our social justice program has a strong presence in the community. We are partnered with a local children's home, women's shelter, and Interfaith Caring Ministries. We have an engaged GLBT advocacy group and recently began hosting a satellite chapter of Houston PFLAG. Our mental health group is active in local and national advocacy programs and hosts a weekly support group. We also have a health ministry, peace group, and environmental committee among others.

Religious Education has been key to our success as a church. We have a dedicated RE Council, volunteer teachers and are currently the only UU church in Houston with a paid Youth Director leading our program for high-school youth and young adults. Beyond weekly children's and adult programming on Sundays and weeknights throughout the year, BAUUC has offered our Multi-Culture Week in the summer to school-age children for over a decade. The RE program also provides intergenerational opportunities through our Fall Festival, holiday program, Earth Day celebration and community service events.

Fellowship at BAUUC brings new and long-time members of the church together - usually over a meal. We have Wednesday night dinners, Sunday lunches, movie nights, home parties, theatrical events, campouts and other chances to form personal relationships.

We offer quality worship services and have an amazing music program boasting over 10% of the congregation active in the choir and a rejuvenated children's music program. We see the importance of small-group ministries to maintain personal connections in a growing church, and our covenant group program is sought out by other congregations for best practices training.

We are a teaching and learning congregation and hired our first intern minister this year. Our Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. Matt Tittle, is a retired naval officer and former university professor called to a third career in the ministry. He maintains a strong public presence across Houston through regular radio appearances and his blog, *Keep the Faith*, hosted by the Houston Chronicle.

# Roles and Responsibilities of the DLRE

## Does the religious educator have responsibility for any youth group(s)?

Oversight of the youth program through supervision of the staff Youth Director.

## Does the religious educator have responsibility for providing Sunday morning childcare (infants/babies/toddlers)?

Oversight of paid childcare provider(s) with assistance from a volunteer childcare coordinator.

## At other times?

Wednesday Night at the Church and as requested and feasible for other church events.

## Does the religious educator have responsibility for administering the adult religious education program?

Oversight through the RE Council and Adult RE Committee.

## Does the religious educator have responsibility for supervising any staff? If yes, describe.

Yes. The DLRE supervises the ½-time Youth Director and the paid childcare provider(s).

## Religious Educator role, function, and relationship in the Congregation:

- The Board currently has the authority to hire and dismiss the DLRE. This may change over time as the congregation considers a shift to a policy-based governance model.
- The DLRE regularly participates in all aspects of congregational life to maintain a familiar, respected and visible presence of the Religious Education program.

## Religious Educator role, function and relationship with Parish or Senior Minister:

The Senior Minister supervises the DLRE and all paid staff.

## Religious Educator role, function, and relationship with the Staff Ministers:

The DLRE works in collegial and collaborative relationships with staff and intern ministers as religious professionals.

## Religious Educator role, function, and relationship with other paid staff:

The DLRE works in an appropriate fashion for their functions and duties as a co-worker alongside other paid staff.

## Current clergy and staff (include all paid staff):

Position:	Date of hire/call:	F/T or hrs. per week:	Supervised by/ reports to:	Is staff member a church member?
Senior Minister	August 2004	Fulltime	Congregation	Yes
Intern Minister	August 2009	Fulltime	Senior Minister	No
Music Director	Mar 2004	20 hr/wk	Senior Minister	Yes
Youth Director	May 2008	20 hr/wk	DLRE	Yes
Office Admin.	April 2004	30 hr/wk	Senior Minister	No
Sexton	May 2003	Fulltime	Senior Minister	No
Bookkeeper	August 2005	15 hr/wk	Treasurer	No

**List, most recent first, all religious educators (including interim or acting) who have served since 1990 and earlier religious educators of great importance:**

<b>Religious Educator :</b>	<b>Date arrived:</b>	<b>Date departed:</b>	<b>Reason for Departure:</b>	<b>Current Relationship to Congregation:</b>
Mary Rogers	July 2008	August 2009	Negotiated Resignation	None
Mary K. Isaacs	August 2007	July 2008	Interim	None
Brenda Cockrell	June 1992	July 2007	Retired	DRE Emerita and member
Cheryl Walter	August 1985	June 1992	Health issues	Inactive member

## **Current Congregational Life and Religious Education**

**Does the congregation have a mission – not a mission statement, but a glowing coal at its center – and if so, what is it?**

Our glowing coal is two-fold: (1) To be a vibrant, spiritual home for a growing number of members, and (2) to have a growing influence in both our local community and the greater Houston area.

**What is the mission of the religious education program?**

To provide a safe environment for students at all ages of life to explore and articulate their own beliefs and learn UU principles to guide their relationships with the greater community.

**Describe the religious education for children youth and adults.**

The Religious Education program at BAUUC can be divided into three groups:

- Children (Toddlers – 8th Grade) have RE classes on Sunday morning during services. Students begin the session either in the Sanctuary or in a short Children’s Chapel for group worship before going to class. Each class is taught by a team of volunteer teachers and follows a curriculum exploring UU principles and world religions. The normal school year runs from September through May. We also provide RE classes & curriculum on Sunday mornings in the summer months.  
Each summer BAUUC also offers Multi-Culture Week for children Pre-K through fifth grades to provide experiences in different cultures through activities, crafts, history, music and food. This five-day program culminates in a special performance where the students present skits, songs and dance to share their experiences.
- High school students and recent graduates participate in the church’s youth program, YRUU. This program encompasses social action, community service, fellowship, intellectual growth and leadership development. It is lead by our staff Youth Director, assisted by Youth Advisors and volunteer teachers. They meet on alternate Sunday mornings and throughout the week for scheduled events.
- Adult religious education is valued as a lifelong process. We have an active discussion group that meets between services on Sunday mornings and ongoing classes and special topic seminars throughout the week. We regularly offer “New UU” classes to introduce visitors and new

members to the UU faith and our church. Other classes and topics are suggested and taught by members of the congregation based on their interests, knowledge and skills.

Our Whole Lives (OWL) is a series of ethically-oriented human sexuality curricula available for different age groups. The RE program offers OWL classes for kindergarten through high school on a rotating schedule. Adult OWL is currently offered once every few years.

### **Describe the religious education program strengths.**

Religious Education is a cornerstone of BAUUC. Congregational support is demonstrated by our recently completed RE wing to the building, priority increases in the RE budget and a core of volunteers dedicated to the children of our church.

The program is strengthened by the students of all ages who are both excited and engaged by RE programming and who look forward to their classes as a way to connect with the larger church community.

### **Describe the religious education program challenges.**

As we expand our programming in response to congregational growth, we also need to engage new volunteers. We must find ways of encouraging parents, new members and other adults to volunteer in the classroom.

Innovative techniques are needed to address indifferent, unenthusiastic and disruptive students. Adult classes need to better represent the diverse interests of our congregation.

### **What religious education program issues are likely to be most pressing within the next couple of years?**

- Modifying our governance model and transforming from a medium-sized to large church
- Transitioning the DRE's role from a pastoral model to a professional model
- Expanding children's programming beyond Sunday morning classes
- Evaluating the challenges and opportunities provided by distance-learning and online technologies
- Addressing the challenges of having special-needs students in the children's RE classes
- Providing childcare during most church activities

### **Over the next ten years?**

Continued growth into a large church with limited space and volunteer resources

### **What religious education issues may never be resolved?**

- Volunteer sustainment
- Student apathy
- Space limitations

### **To what degree does the congregation possess a dominant theology or religious philosophy?**

Like most UU congregations, BAUUC has no dominant theology, but a mix of humanism, agnosticism, atheism, Christianity, paganism, Buddhism, mysticism, and religious naturalism. Also like most UU congregations, our longer-term members are more likely to identify with humanism and our newer members are more likely to pluralistically embrace Christianity or other faiths from which they came in the context of UUsim, rather than to reject their past faith affiliations. We work intentionally toward a UU theology as a syncretic endeavor rather than approaching world religions from an eclectic perspective.

### **Describe the role of music and arts in the life of the congregation.**

Music is central to our worship experience.

Our adult choir boasts an open membership of more than 10% of the congregation. In addition a number of instrumental and vocal soloists and ensembles regularly perform during services.

A bi-weekly music class offered between services for children up to age 5, and children's and youth choirs meet weekly.

Members of the congregation are active in regional musical and theatrical organizations, and the church hosts performances and readings throughout the year.

## **Lay Leadership and Religious Education**

### **What are the responsibilities of the Religious Education Committee and how does it function?**

The Religious Education Council aids the Director of Lifespan Religious Education (DLRE) in coordinating the church school curricula. The Council assists in recruiting and training teachers and volunteers, scheduling classes and special events, and promoting good parent/church-school relations. The RE Council has four active committees: Children's RE, Adult RE, Curriculum and Activities. The Youth Director and DLRE are ex-officio members of the Council which meets monthly to coordinate program activities and special events.

### **What are the Religious Education Committee's strengths?**

The RE Council enjoys overwhelming support from the congregation. This support attracts our most experienced and motivated church leaders to serve on the Council and provide outstanding programming for our church.

### **What are the Religious Education Committee's challenges?**

- Meeting the demands of a growing congregation
- Utilizing new technologies to provide programming to the congregation and greater community

### **Identify any other committees related to religious education, youth and adults or to the religious educator. (List the committee name, function and its relationship with the Religious Educator.)**

We are currently discerning significant changes to both our governance and programmatic structure. However, the DLRE and RE Council interact regularly with our Fellowship and Social Justice Councils for activities; with our Worship Committee for worship and music issues; and with our Membership Committee for volunteer recruitment.

# The Religious Educator

## **Describe the process by which a religious educator will be hired.**

1. Board of Directors selects and approves Five Search Committee members.

The Committee then

2. ... solicits input from the Board of Directors, RE Council, previous DLRE Search Committee and the congregation.

3. ... prepares the job description and supporting documents.

4. ... posts the job announcement and advertises the position.

5. ... sends the Senior Minister to LREDA and SWUUC fall conferences to provide information to interested parties.

6. ... receives letters of interest and resumes from applicants via email at dresearch@bauuc.org.

7. ... evaluates candidate applications.

8. ... conducts telephone interviews with select candidates.

9. ... contacts applicant references and performs comprehensive background checks.

10. ... invites finalists for on-site interviews at BAUUC.

11. ... selects a final candidate by consensus of the Committee.

12. ... submits the final candidate to the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors then

13. ... approves the Committee's selection.

13. ... negotiates the job offer and finalizes details of employment.

## **Describe the process by which the Religious Educator Search Religious Committee (or its equivalent) was chosen:**

The Board of Directors required a Search Committee of five members to represent the congregation, including the Senior Minister and a member of the Religious Education Council. Three of the five members have children currently active in the RE program.

The members selected include:

- Senior Minister
- Representative of the RE Council
- Member of the Board of Directors
- Church elder with experience in church administration and religious education
- Church member active in SWUUC and GA planning

## **Assess the capacity of the congregation to exercise forbearance and nurture in assisting a religious educator's professional development.**

The DLRE is expected to possess or pursue credentialing as a professional religious educator through the UUA and participate in other leadership and development opportunities. Professional and credentialing expenses are provided in the annual budget, and time is provided for attending training and denominational events.

## **What expectations, however silent, might there be about the religious educator's family and personal life?**

BAUUC is a socially active church. The DLRE is expected to regularly attend Wednesday Night At The Church and other church-wide social activities. The DLRE should have a personal life outside of church and should focus on family-care and self-care. The DLRE's family is invited, but not expected to participate in fellowship, social justice and worship activities as part of the church community. The DLRE and family are welcomed but not required to formally join BAUUC as members.

We are a UUA Welcoming Congregation and celebrate relationships that affirm UU principles.

**Describe the worst mistake your new professional religious leader could make.**

- A professional act or omission which is inconsistent with UU principles or which violates the LREDA *Code of Professional Practices* or covenant with the congregation.
- Failure to communicate openly and in right relationship with staff, congregation, leadership.

**Religious Educator skills and enthusiasms most needed by the congregation**

**4-Crucial 3-Significant 2-Modest 1-Of less consequence**

*Note: use no numeral but "1" more than four times.*

4	RE Administration
2	Adult Religious Education
1	Visual Arts and/or Crafts
1	Committee Work
4	Volunteer Support
3	Denominational/District Activities
1	Singing/Instrumental Music
1	Community Outreach
2	Children's Worship
2	Young Adult Work
4	Group Leadership
3	Membership Growth
2	Worship For All Ages
1	Personal Counseling with Families
1	Stewardship
1	Community Building
1	Youth Work
4	Faith/Spiritual Development
3	Curricula Development
1	Social Action
1	Storytelling
3	Staff Supervision