

RIGHT FROM THE START:
A STARTUP PROCESS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS
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WHAT?

This *Start-Up* process is designed to assist the Religious Educator who is new to a congregation, his or her colleagues and lay leaders, and congregants to get to know one another better at the start of their relationship. This is done through an exploration of the congregation's history, its current functioning and "culture", and mutual hopes for the future. Through this process of sharing and familiarization, a set of goals and action steps can be identified to guide all parties through the initial period of adjustment.

WHY?

The clarification of expectations, goals, and ways of relating at the beginning helps to establish a stable and healthy environment in which the RE Professional can grow and flourish. An effective startup process sets the stage for a productive and healthy working relationship.

WHO?

It is vital that the Parish Minister, other church staff, RE Committee/Council, and Board or Council leaders attend the entire startup process. In addition, it is important to have broad representation of parents, youth, and congregation members present as possible.

WHEN AND WHERE?

As soon as the Religious Educator accepts the position, a date for the startup process can be chosen in consultation with the District Director for Lifespan Faith Development. The District Director or a Congregational Consultant will be conducting the process. At least two months in advance, plan for the day-long Saturday program in a suitable meeting space, with morning refreshments and a light luncheon provided on-site. Arrange for child care to enable parents to attend. Ample advance publicity and personal invitations help build interest and encourage better attendance. A small committee of people can be recruited to plan and organize the event, coordinating the details with the Religious Educator, other congregation leaders, and the outside facilitator. The process is most successful if conducted 3-6 months after the DRE begins work, but can be very helpful at other points as well.

HOW?

To schedule a *Start-Up* for a religious educator new to their position, contact the Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Conference District Director for Lifespan Faith Development at 817-874-4895 (mobile) or by email: jnichols@uua.org at least two months in advance. When scheduling with the District Director for a *Start-Up* process, check the congregation's master calendar and identify two or three weekends without other major events schedule.

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