



"BOY-FRIENDLY" RE IS NOTHING NEW!

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The picture on the left is taken from the front page of the December 24, **1858** issue of "The Sunday School Gazette," the children's bimonthly magazine of the Unitarian Sunday School Society. The first few sentences read:

"No reader of the Gazette, old or young, need be informed that this picture represents a

Sabbath-School Class of boys listening to their teacher's earnest words. The influence of one devoted teacher is immeasurable. It goes on increasing, widening, extending in this life and forever."

The magazine was very popular and was distributed to most Unitarian homes from 1849 to 1935. The name was changed to "Dayspring" in 1872, to "Every Other Sunday" in 1885, and to "The Beacon" in 1912.

From time to time, the records of the Unitarian Sunday School Society mention the challenge of teaching religious education to boys. For example, the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of **1871** include a series of questions taken from the Question Box, the first two of which read as follows:

"How are the big boys to be kept in the Sunday School?" and

"How can a class of little active, kinky, five- and six-year-old boys be interested in Sunday School?"

The details of the discussion are not recorded but the questions could very well be raised at a teacher-training conference today.

Perhaps helpful answers to those questions would have been given by the Rev. Charles Francis Barnard (Unitarian) who founded the Warren Street Chapel of Boston as an outreach to poor children in 1835. He advised teachers to teach while holding an object in their hands illustrating their lesson. He also organized field trips, invited leaders of various trades to speak before the children, involved the children in gardening, and instituted a woodworking shop and sewing classes at the Chapel. The minutes of the Unitarian Sunday School Society indicate that he spoke before various

conferences during the 1840–1870 period. Copies of the minutes and the magazine can be viewed at the Andover-Harvard Library of Harvard Divinity School where the archives of the UUA are kept. Also, a story about the Warren Street Chapel can be read at the UUA's web site (www.uua.org) under REACH and UU Faith Works.

For further information about the history of Unitarian and Universalist religious education, please contact the UU RE History Group, tel. 508-224-5282