

**Live Mindfully and
Love Faithfully!**

**Religious Education
for
Unitarian Universalist
Children and Youth**

2017-2018

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Welcome From Our Director

Why It Matters

Welcome to Religious Education (RE) at First Unitarian! From the roots of 'religious' (*re-ligio* - to bind back), and 'education' (*educare* - to set free), our programs seek to offer children and youth the liberation of a spiritual life in which one deeply connects to oneself through listening and curiosity, connects and opens to life's gifts of grace and love, and connects with and serves needs greater than one's own.

Why does coming to our program matter? Fundamentally, we believe our RE mission will make a difference in both your child's and your family's lives. The culture in which we live has many influences that counter Unitarian Universalist (UU) values! A solid religious education, coupled with a strong community of support, can provide the answer many parents seek in order to best thrive in today's society. We aim to foster growth that will enable young people to **"live mindfully and love faithfully"** in the world!

From worship experiences to hands-on engagement with the arts, social action, learning exercises, and leadership opportunities, we offer many means to plug in, have fun, and grow! This year we are proud to continue comprehensive sexuality education, comprehensive social action integration, and comprehensive mindfulness education, while adding more intergenerational opportunities and deepening our children's understanding of cultural difference and diversity. Definitely not our grandparents' "Sunday School"!

Our co-op is an adventure, with input and support from the Religious Education staff, our parents, teachers, and participants. Nearly 130 church members and friends receive safety screening and training in order to serve as volunteers.

My hope is that your family will find that time spent at First Unitarian becomes a respite from the pressures that pull and tug at you as a family (take a breath and regroup!), a support while facing the daily challenges of staying tuned in to what's important (go deeper!), and a continual experience of growth and celebration (Yes!). We are serious about our desire and commitment to walk with you. We want our children and youth to build and strengthen their connections to their deepest selves and to the gifts of life. We also want them to serve needs greater than their own by recognizing, addressing, and actively reducing the forces within our culture that so deeply divide!

Welcome! It matters that you are here!

In faith,
Sheila Schuh, CRE, LCAT
Director of Religious Education
SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org
585-271-9070, x109

Our Program Mission

We help young people listen, open, and serve by providing learning experiences that include practical skills and service (promoting UU Principles), playful adventure, and counter-cultural wisdom (drawing on UU Sources).

It's about creating children and youth who...**live mindfully and love faithfully!**

Unitarian Universalist

Principles

We are a covenantal faith community with no creed to which members must subscribe. We promise, however, to affirm and promote the following principles in our listening, opening, and serving:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
Acceptance of and encouragement for one another as we work toward spiritual growth in our congregations;
A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
The right to apply conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society;
The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
Respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part.

Sources of the Living Tradition

In pursuit of these principles, we draw wisdom from the continuously-revealed sources named below:

Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
Words and deeds of prophetic women and men. These challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
Inspired wisdom from the world's religions which helps guide us in our ethical and spiritual lives;
Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Connections: Spanning the Ages

Our program has components that we build on over time so that our children can grow more deeply in faith.

Spiritual Practices - Worship experiences range from simple chalice lighting in Pre-K to spiritual enrichment opportunities for our teens in Youth Group. Mindfulness training starts with simple songs and breathing exercises in Pre-K and moves on to meditation and working on individual spiritual practices in Coming of Age. From listening circles and singing to questioning and reflecting together, these threads span the different age groups to help develop your child's spiritual life.

Sexuality Education - Our Whole Lives (OWL) is a comprehensive sexuality education program developed to equip UU children and youth with the knowledge and tools they will need to navigate sexuality issues in today's culture. Our K-1, 5th-9th, and 10th-12th levels all have parent education components as well. These are integrated into our regular programs.

Social Action - Each level of programming offers social action opportunities based on age-appropriate understandings of the sufferings and circumstances of others in need. Young families can participate together in many things, including packing backpacks at Foodlink; preparing beds for homeless families as part of the Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network (RAIHN); and/or intentionally reducing holiday spending while participating in the Greater Good Project. Workshop Adventure participants travel to our Super Hero City, a room in which they learn about and take action on issues

such as unfair trade, hunger and homelessness, hatred and violence, and environmental degradation. Spiritual Survivor groups are apprenticed to each of our social justice task forces, with whom they do hands-on projects to learn service skills. Coming of Age and Youth Group participants plan their own projects and are encouraged to "Bring It Home" – to bring an issue of national importance to First Unitarian.

Education and Adventure - All of the above are integrated into the programs outlined in the pages that follow. Educational components include skills-based learning exercises, exploration, off-site adventures, monthly worship themes experienced through the arts, and leadership opportunities. Each program acknowledges its graduates with a special ritual and celebration.

Program Offerings

Early Childhood

6 months through 4 years

Contact: Tamika Ballard, Director of Early Childhood

Nursery & Toddler Room

6 months - ~2years, 9months

Our very youngest Unitarian Universalists are cared for by nurturing adults. We provide enough caregivers to ensure that our little ones receive full attention. Infants under 6 months are usually "babes in arms," either in the worship service or in the overflow room with the video loop if the babe is crying. The overflow room is often Room 110, but please check the order of service for possible changes.

Pre-K Room

~ 2 years, 9 months - 4 years

Heart Talk for Kids

September - December

Connect kids with their own power to create peaceful relationships through learning communication skills based on Marshall Rosenberg's model of nonviolent communication. Lessons emphasize feelings, universal needs, making requests, understanding (empathy) for yourself and others, gratitude, transforming anger, conflict resolution, and active peacemaking.

We Are Many, We Are One

January - May

Stories, games and projects encourage children to honor themselves, their religious community, nature and cultures from around the world. Features a rich array of games, songs, and family newsletters to build relationships between teachers and home.

Parents are encouraged to help decide when their children are ready for moving up/more structure; however, please note that the curriculum repeats every two years.

**Early Childhood groups meet
Sunday 9:30am and 11:15am**

.Workshop Adventure

Grades: K - 5th

Contact: Sheila Schuh, Director of Religious Education

Take the Workshop Adventure!

Children gather in Gilbert Hall each week for an interactive worship (20 minutes or less) focused on two important elements: The monthly all-church worship theme and a related ethical tale or sacred story from a world religion. Singing, greeting, mindfulness exercises, impromptu drama, curiosity, and movement are all included!

After group worship, the children head out with their group traveler to a designated workshop room, specifically designed to reflect the UU Sources of the Living Tradition. Room themes will include: My Sacred Stage (learning from direct experiences of life), Thinking Cap Lab (humanistic teachings), Super Hero City (words and deeds of prophetic men and women), Nature Center (earth-based teachings about life's sacred cycle), Guru Gym (wisdom from world religions), and The Good Neighborhood (Jewish and Christian teachings on love). Workshop leaders will guide the children through an experience that helps them explore the worship theme/story as it relates to them as Unitarian Universalists.

**Our Whole Lives (OWL)
Human Sexuality Education
5th Grade**

This program will be conducted in the late winter/early spring. This curriculum supports the "three R's" of childhood sexuality education: Respect, Relationships, and Responsibility. Some of OWL's goals:
help families communicate openly about life questions.
help children learn to make responsible decisions that show respect for self and others.

**Workshop Adventure meets
Sunday 9:30am and 11:15 am**

**Spiritual Survivor
Grades: 6th – 8th**

Contact: CaTyra Polland, **Director of Junior Youth Ministry**

It's a reality! Being a young adolescent and navigating the wider culture as a person of faith is a challenge. Many forces aim to separate youth from their deepest selves, others, and the wider web of life. Spiritual Survivor helps give junior high youth the skills and experience necessary to meet these challenges with confidence, support, and fun! Our program is designed to provide three survivor challenges per year, as follows:

The Mega Mall Challenge

Participants will take the challenge of resisting cultural temptations to over-consume and learn to listen more deeply to inner values and needs greater than one's own. One's relationship with money will be explored in terms of decision-making, product education, one's attitude of gratitude, and lifestyle choices. Excursions include a trip to the mall and monastery among others, and social justice focuses on poverty.

**Our Whole Lives (OWL)
Sexuality Education**

Participants will gain information that broadens their understanding of sexuality to include more than "sex": Values clarification, personal ethics, and application of our UU Principles to enforce responsible, respectful behavior. OWL is included in all three years of junior high programming, run between the two Challenges by specially trained facilitators. Parent permission required.

The Loner Challenge

Participants will explore the largest challenge facing adolescents: isolation. Groups will explore the

difference between solitude and loneliness, as well as networking skills, identifying peer isolation, and reaching out to people in other age demographics or religions. Excursions may include a trip to the Islamic Center, as well as to Valley Manor, and social justice may include Roc/ACTS and refugee organizations.

The fall and spring challenges include in-house worship, off-site visits to other faith communities, social action training and projects, and community-building fun. Parents will be encouraged to attend/participate in selected offerings and activities as their youths complete the challenges.

**Spiritual Survivor meets
Sunday 9:30am and 11:15am**

**Coming of Age
Grades: 9th – 10th**

Contacts: Rev. Lynn Acquafondata, Director of Coming of Age
Sheila Schuh, Director of Religious Education

Get ready for the journey of a lifetime!

Experience a UU church hop, ropes course, overnight retreats, worship, sexuality education, social action and more! In this small group, teens examine what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist in everyday life in order to help them embrace our mission and history more fully. We will explore connections with and the importance of community, self, others (in the form of personal ministry), and life-giving sources/spiritual practices. Youth will be encouraged to articulate what they believe as well as how they perceive themselves to be living their values within our culture. They will address stumbling blocks as they move toward listening, opening to life's gifts, and serving needs greater than their own. Culminating activities include a pilgrimage to historical UU sites in Boston and Walden Pond and a worship service celebrating their year of growth.

As this is a journey group, COA enrollment only remains open until early October.

**The Coming of Age meets
Sunday 11:15–12:30 pm**

**Youth Group
Grades: 9th – 12th**

Contact: **Wayne Holt, Youth Ministry Coordinator**

Check it out!

Open to all high school teens, Youth Group is a youth-driven meet-up with room for everyone to get involved in community building, social action, and spiritual development! Come when you can or be part of a strong core of regulars. Typical group activities include a weekly check-in and a youth-led activity - everything from art meditation to packing condoms, from planning a fundraiser for scholarships in Honduras to making videos or CDs! There are also social action projects such as "Bring it Home" - a study of one national UU issue in which youth will encourage our congregation to get involved.

*Note: Youth may participate in both Youth Group and Coming of Age in the same year.

**Youth Group meets
Sunday 12:30–2:00 pm**

Parent Opportunities & Resources

All parents are encouraged to sign up for the weekly church newsletter on our webpage. Once your child is registered in RE you will receive a weekly newsletter about your child's program.

Ongoing groups for parents:

UU Families in Action - Watch RE news for different opportunities throughout the year.

Parenting as Spiritual Practice - A monthly offering for any parent who wishes to learn non-violent communication skills, mindfulness techniques, and nourish gratitude.

Soul Matters for Parents - All parents are invited to join a monthly Soul Matters group on the worship theme, after completing Starting Point.

UU Family Circle Training - A new bi-annual offering for families wanting to integrate UU values more deeply into home life. Basics of nonviolent communication, family circle process, mindfulness practice, and gratitude practice will be shared.

Looking for a group that doesn't exist? Contact Sheila at SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org, 585-271-9070, x109 or Rev. Tina Simson, Minister of Spiritual Development and Pastoral Care at tsimson@rochesterunitarian.org, 585-330-9177

To be held:

Parent orientation to our program. Contact Sheila at SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org or 585-271-9070, x109.

Starting Point – An Introduction to the UU Journey. Usually a 4-class series, this series offers a look at Unitarian Universalism in general and First Unitarian in specific. Contact church office 585-271-9070.

Special needs: If your child has a special need, our Friends in Faith program may be able to help. Contact Sheila at SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org or 585-271-9070, x109.

Pastoral Care: If you or your child is in need of pastoral care, you may contact any RE staff member, or Rev. Tina Simson, Minister of Pastoral Care and Adult Spiritual Development at tsimson@rochesterunitarian.org or 585-330-9170.

***Note:** Some RE programs have parent meetings scheduled as part of your child's learning. You will be notified individually of these.

Parental Responsibilities

Our RE ministry is a cooperative of parents who make common commitments for the mutual benefit of all children and youth. These include:

Striving for consistent attendance at the time selected, which demonstrates that church and faith are important. Building trust and friendship nurtures our common life.

Showing our commitment to financially support our church and its mission.

Staying informed by reading our church and RE newsletters.

Finding time each year to volunteer for a five to ten session commitment. This is essential to our program, and we thank you. We know how busy all parents are!

Remaining in the building while the children (through 8th grade) are in educational programming and picking them up when the program time has ended.

Providing timely feedback (both positive and constructive) in order to help assess and improve the program.

Religious Education Staff:

Sheila Schuh, Director of Religious Education,
SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org , 585-271-9070 x109, or 585-743-0425

Jan Cook, Mindfulness Educator,
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Rev. Lynn Acquafondata, Director of Coming of Age, acquafondatal@gmail.com ,
585-330-1340

CaTyra Polland, Director of Junior Youth Ministry, c.polland@yahoo.com , 716-238-1200

Wayne Holt, Youth Ministry Coordinator,
wholt555@frontiernet.net , **585-467-2147**

Tamika Ballard, Director of Early Childhood, tamikaballard26@gmail.com , 315-898- 3872

Emma Kilmer, Family Welcome Assistant/ Group Leader, emmabug7@gmail.com ,
585-831-0343

Caitlin McQuilken-Scholze , Infant/ Toddler Childcare Provider,
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585-271-9070 x109

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Registration

Visit First!

If you are new to our program, we encourage you to visit as a guest three or four times prior to registering your child. During your first visit, we will ask you to complete the guest sign-in sheet at each child's class. Upon your repeat visits, please add today's date to your original entry. Visit the FAMILY WELCOME counter located in the lobby for more information and directions to the class rooms.

Register!

If you would like, we would be happy to meet with you (in person or by phone) before you formally enroll your child to explain the philosophy and expectations of our program. We welcome your interest and participation as you make First Unitarian your family's religious home!

Online: Please visit our page at <http://rochesterunitarian.org/children-youth-religious-education/>

At Church: Please stop by our FAMILY WELCOME counter located in the church lobby to register online.

Via Postal Service: Please call Marj at the RE office, 585-271-9070, x109 or email her at readmin@rochesterunitarian.org.

Thank you, and welcome to our RE Community!

Very Important
Religious Education Dates

Date	Event
September 10	Homecoming weekend, all ages worship; Spiritual Survival Meet & Greet; Youth Group Pot Luck
September 17	Religious Education Begins!
September 29—October 1	Unirondack weekend for First Unitarian
October 22	Our Common Life meeting

October 29	Greater Good Voting
November 5	Memory Tree, all-ages worship
November 26	Holiday Break, No RE
December 10	Greater Good Weekend; Our Common Life meeting
December 16	Solstice, all ages worship
December 24	Christmas Eve Celebrations
December 31	New Year's, all-ages worship
January 8	Our Whole Lives Sexuality begins for 6th—9th grades
February 11	Our Common Life meeting
February 18	Winter Break, No RE
March 18	Equinox, all ages worship
March 25	Our Common Life meeting
April 1	Spring Break, No RE
May 20	Program Graduation Rituals for Pre-K, 5th and 8th graders
June 3	Music Sunday; Flower Communion
June 10	Coming of Age Rite of Passage
June 17	Bridging Rite of Passage
June 24	Summer RE Begins