

# 2020-21 Programs

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## *RELIGIOUS EDUCATION at First Unitarian Church*

### Welcome from our Director

#### Why it Matters

Why does coming to our program matter this year? Fundamentally, we believe our Religious Education (RE) mission will make a difference in both your child's and your family's life! The culture in which we live has many influences that counter Unitarian Universalist 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 and families to "live mindfully and love faithfully" in the world!

RE at First Unitarian is definitely not our grandparents' "Sunday School"! 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 will be different, beginning online with most every group and offering more choice of options. In winter or spring we hope to safely offer our comprehensive sexuality education program. We will continue to provide comprehensive mindfulness education, build understanding of multiculturalism and inclusion, and engage our young leaders in environmental justice!

Our co-op is an adventure, with input and support from the Religious Education staff, our parents, teachers, and participants. Church members and friends receive safety screening and training in order to serve as volunteers. Our private zoom links and waiting rooms strengthen online security for families.

My hope is that your family will find that time spent at First Unitarian becomes a respite from the pressures that tug at you as a family, a support while facing the daily challenges of staying tuned in to what's important, and a continual experience of growth and celebration. We are serious about our desire and commitment to walk with you.

In faith,  
Sheila Schuh, CRE-ML  
Director of Religious Education

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# Unitarian Universalist Principles

## *Our 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 multicultural wisdom (drawing on UU Sources). It's about creating children and youth who...live mindfully and love faithfully!*

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;
- Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions.



# Sources of the Living Tradition

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 people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;

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 overtime 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)

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 understanding of human suffering and oppressive life circumstances. Young families can participate together in many things, including packing backpacks at Foodlink; preparing beds for guest 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 Superhero 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 ministries, with whom they do hands-on projects to learn service skills. Coming of Age and Youth Group participants plan their own projects with ministries 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

Our church community takes your family's wellness very seriously and we will likely not be opening our building for all community worship and RE until May 2021, at the earliest. However, RE groups and offerings will continue to meet online and with limited specialized meetings, depending on the group. This calendar offers a snapshot of virtual offerings we are beginning with in September 2020, understanding that changes will be made as needed. Program descriptions follow in more detail.

Times	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
8:00 - 8:15 AM				Rise/Shine Mindfulness	
9:30 - 9:50 AM	Children's Worship				
10:30 - 11:25am	Coming of Age				
11:30 AM -12:25PM	Spiritual Survivor				
12:30 - 1:30 PM	Youth Group				
3:00 - 3:20 PM				Workshop Adventure	
3:20 - 3:40 PM				Chalice Circles	
4:00 - 4:30/5:00 PM				Advocacy Groups 1x	
6:30 - 7:45 PM			Parents/Divide 1x/mo		
7:00 - 7:20 PM					Love/Justice Bedtime Stories
8:30 -9:45 PM		Parenting Group 2x/mo			



# Program Descriptions

## **BABES & TOTS (6 months - 4 years)**

### **Children's Worship** - *Virtually Sundays at 9:30 AM*

Families gather with their young children to participate in song, ritual, and story. This worship includes interactive questions, mindfulness practice, and encouragement for families to build their UU faith together all week.

### **Love and Justice Bedtime Stories** - *Virtually Thursdays at 7:00 PM*

Snuggle up with your child for a simple chalice lighting, mindful minute, and a story geared to foster connection and nurture important early conversations about love and fairness.

## **WORKSHOP ADVENTURE (K - 5th grade)**

### **Children's Worship** - *Virtually Sundays at 9:30 AM*

Families gather with their young children to participate in song, ritual, and story. This worship includes interactive questions, mindfulness practice, and encouragement for families to build their UU faith together all week.

### **Children's Workshops** - *Virtually Wednesdays at 3:00 PM*

Workshops of 4-6 weeks are designed to teach the UU Sources of the Living Tradition and to sync up with our Monthly Worship Themes. These include: Imaginarians (learning from direct experiences of life and Jewish and Christian teachings on love), Lab of Love (humanistic teachings), Super Friends (words and deeds of prophetic people), Green Power (earth-based teachings about life's sacred cycle), and Guru Group (wisdom from world religions). Workshops will guide children through an experience that helps them explore the worship theme/story as it relates to them as Unitarian Universalists.

### **Children's Chalice Circles** - *Virtually Wednesdays at 3:20 PM*

Small groups in which children can share joys and sorrows, and connect with other families with children of similar ages.

### **Our Whole Lives (OWL) Human Sexuality Education (K - 1st & 5th grade)**

These programs are in-person only and conducted in late winter/early spring. This curriculum supports the "three R's" of childhood sexuality education: Respect, Relationships, and Responsibility. OWL's goals are to help families communicate openly about life questions, and to help children learn to make responsible decisions that show respect for self and others with accurate information grounded in UU values. Our K-1 Program meets every other year (next in 2022).

# Program Offerings continued

## **UU Green Group (K - 8th grade) - Virtually First Wednesdays of Month at 4:00 PM**

This advocacy group for environmental justice meets to learn, deepen relationships with the natural world, and engage in action.

## **Sacred Arts Team (3rd - 12th grade) - Meets per project**

This group offers children and youth the opportunity to use their theatrical, musical, tech, storytelling or other skills in supporting worship creations for all ages.

## **Jubilee Kids! (5th grade) - Meets in Spring**

Children learn many facets of healthy racial and ethnic identity. Emphasis is on building skills in promoting the Beloved Community through words, action, and understanding of historical and contemporary inequities and racism.

## **JUNIOR HIGH YOUTH (6th - 8th grade)**

### **Spiritual Survivor (6th - 8th grade) - Virtually Sundays at 11:30 AM**

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 four survivor challenges this year, as follows:

**The Mega Mall Challenge:** Participants will explore the challenge of being a wise consumer in a highly materialistic and consumerism environment. Understanding of how capitalism affects other systems and how one's own values relate to the process of production and consumption is explored. Virtual visits will be to other faith traditions who prioritize simple living including Mennonites and local monastic communities.

**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, and is run between the two Challenges by specially trained facilitators. Parent permission required.

**Junior Youth Jubilee:** Junior youth learn many facets of healthy racial and ethnic identity. Emphasis is on building skills in promoting the Beloved Community through words, action, and understanding of historical and contemporary inequities and racism.

**The Loner Challenge:** Participants will explore the challenge of not becoming isolated and not excluding others in one's peer relations. Basic skills of self-compassion, networking, and promoting inclusion are practiced. Virtual visits to faith traditions such as the Zen Center, will be included and social action focusing on the needs of marginalized peoples.

# Program Offerings continued

**YoUuth Advocates for Love and Justice (6th - 12th grade) - *Virtually Third Wednesdays of Month at 4:00 PM***

This advocacy group teaches the skills for advocacy and engagement in various social justice efforts including: Anti-racism, Environmental Justice, UU the Vote, LGBTQIA\* Rights, and Criminal Justice Reform.

**UU Green Group (K - 8th grade) - *Virtually First Wednesdays of Month at 4:00 PM***

This advocacy group for environmental justice meets to learn, deepen relationships with the natural world, and engage in action.

**Sacred Arts Team (3rd - 12th grade) - *Meets per project***

This group offers children and youth the opportunity to use their theatrical, musical, tech, storytelling or other skills in supporting worship creations for all ages.

## COMING OF AGE (9th - 10th grade)

**Coming of Age (9th - 10th grade) - *Virtually Sundays at 10:45 AM with some in person***

Get ready for the journey of a lifetime! Experience a UU church hop, ropes course, 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 wonder, and serving together with love and humility. 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.



# Program Offerings continued

## YOUTH (9th - 12th grade)

### **Youth Group (9th - 12th grade)** - *Virtually Sundays at 12:30 PM*

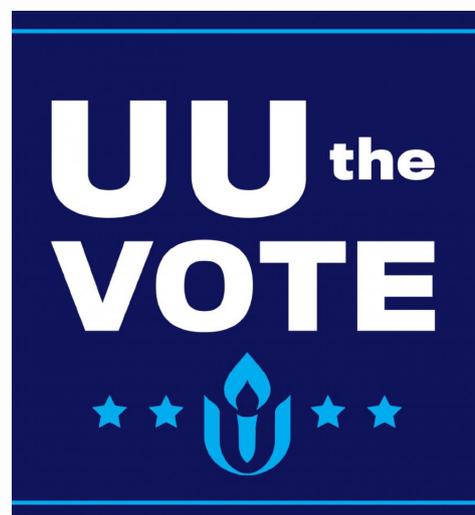
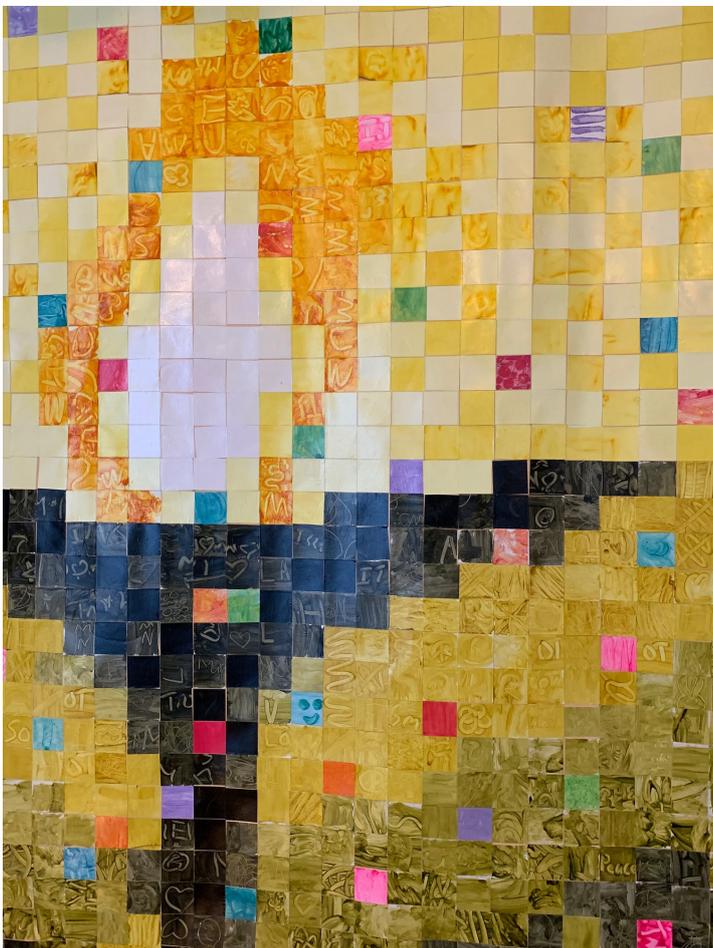
Check it out! Open to all high school teens, Youth Group is a youth-driven meet-up with room for everyone to get involved in community building, social action, and spiritual development! Come when you can or be part of a strong core of regulars. Typical group activities include a weekly check-in and a learning/action activity - everything from art meditation to packing condoms, from planning a fundraiser for scholarships in Honduras to making videos or CDs! Social action projects and learning are in partnership with a First Unitarian ministry and one national UU initiative! *\*Note: Youth may participate in both Youth Group and Coming of Age in the same year.*

### **YoUuth Advocates for Love and Justice (6th - 12th grade)** - *Virtually Third Wednesdays of Month at 4:00 PM*

This advocacy group teaches the skills for advocacy and engagement in various social justice efforts including: Anti-racism, Environmental Justice, UU the Vote, LGBTQIA\* Rights, and Criminal Justice Reform.

### **Sacred Arts Team (3rd - 12th grade)** - *Meets per project*

This group offers children and youth the opportunity to use their theatrical, musical, tech, storytelling or other skills in supporting worship creations for all ages.



# Parent Opportunities & Resources

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

## Ongoing groups for parents

**UU Families of Color** - A casual hangout for families of RE participants who identify as non-white, including Hispanic and Latinx children and youth. Potlucks, outings, and casual meet ups provide space for connecting.

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

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

**Parenting Across the Values Divide** - A monthly offering for parents who are co-parenting or parallel parenting with a caregiver in another household.

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

**White UU Parents Soul Matters Group** - A new Soul Matters circle offering specifically for parents with white identity who wish to deepen their understanding of racism and are committed to being anti-racist accomplices.

**Parent orientation to our program** - Contact [Emma Hale](#).

**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 [Shannan Foos](#).

**Special needs** - If your child has a special need, our Friends in Faith program may be able to help. Contact [Sheila](#) (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. Margalie Belizaire](#), Assistant Minister of Pastoral Care and Adult Spiritual Development, 585-270-0851.

\*Note: Some RE programs have parent meetings scheduled as part of your child's learning. You will be notified individually of these. Looking for a group that doesn't (yet) exist? Contact [Sheila](#) (585-271-9070 x109).

# Parent 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 in some capacity, even online. This is essential to our program, and we thank you. We know how busy all parents are!
- Remaining in the building or in nearby home space while the children (through 8th grade) are in educational programming.
- Providing timely feedback (both positive and constructive) in order to help assess and improve the program.

Questions? Contact [Sheila Schuh](#), Director of Religious Education



# Religious Education Staff

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**Emma Hale**, Director of Junior Youth Ministry & RE Administrator, 585-831-0343  
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## Registration

Visit First!

If you are new to our program, we encourage you to visit as a guest with your child or youth, after you have attended worship services or spoken with our Membership Coordinator, Shannan at sfoos@rochesterunitarian.org, or Director of Religious Education, SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org

Register!

If you would like, we would be happy to meet with you (in person, by phone or zoom) 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!

Register [HERE](#)

Please [visit our web page](#) for all necessary forms

Questions? [Contact Emma!](#)

**Thank you, and welcome to the RE Community  
at First Unitarian Church!**

# Very Important Dates

**September 13 - Homecoming, all ages worship**

**September 14 - RE Begins!**

**November 1 - Memory Tree, all ages worship**

**November 8 - Greater Good Voting**

**November 29 - Holiday break, no RE**

**December 13 - Greater Good Service, all ages worship**

**December 19 - Solstice, all ages worship**

**December 24 - Christmas Eve Celebrations**

**February 14 - Winter Break, No RE**

**March 21 - Equinox, all ages worship**

**April 4 Easter - Special Programming**

**May 23 - Flower Communion, all ages in worship**

**May 30 - Memorial Day, No RE**

**June 6 - Pre-K Stepping Up ritual**

**June 13 - 5th Grade Leap and Coming of Age Rites of Passage**

**June 20 - Youth Bridging Rite of Passage**

**June 27 - Summer RE begins**