

Religious Education for Children at UCWC

September 2016– May 2017

*Offering Sunday programming for Children and Youth,
and Nursery care for children age three and under*

Welcome!

Whether you already consider the Unitarian Congregation of West Chester “home,” or whether you’re visiting for the first time, we are glad you are here with us. We have an exciting year planned for our children, full of exploration, wondering, worship, community-building and fun. (Please see the class descriptions on pages 3-5.)

Our focus this year is on understanding our Unitarian Universalist Principles. The Principles are simple in word, but can be challenging to practice. We begin here—in safe and sacred space—to come to our own understanding of what the Principles say to each of us in terms of how we live our lives.

I look forward to getting to know you and your children better throughout the year. Please contact me with any questions, concerns or suggestions you might have.

In faith and service,

Pam Baxter, Director of Lifespan Faith Development
DLFD@ucwc.org

Our Mission is . . .

- to provide the children of our Congregation with a positive experience of a faith community,
- to educate them in Unitarian Universalist principles and values,
- to empower them to embark on a path of personal faith development,
- to create in them an awareness and appreciation of the faith traditions that shape our world,
- and to provide opportunities for them to put our Unitarian Universalist Principles into action.



In addition, we want our children to have fun, develop friendships and feel a sense of belonging.



Sunday a.m. Schedule

Classes and Youth Group meet downstairs.

Three classes of age-appropriate programs:

10 - 11:15 a.m. Pre-K through 8th Grade

- PreK/K/1st/2nd grades
- 3rd/4th/5th grades
- 6th/7th/8th grades

Youth Group (9th-12th grade)

Times to be announced..

Full Calendar on page 6, and at ucwc.org

Annual Registration is required for all students Pre-K through 8th grade. Visitors are welcome without pre-registering, but please fill out a Visiting Child form at the Greeters Table in the lobby when you arrive.

Registering your child —

- helps us with planning,
- ensures that you receive timely communication about events,
- provides us with information important to your child’s safety,
- allows your child to take part in walking field trips, and for his/her photo to appear anonymously on our website, if you wish.

Please register online at www.ucwc.org.

The Active Role of Parents

First and foremost, we hope you make a regular practice of bringing your children to the Fellowship.

Parents are children's primary spiritual teachers, but there is something children get when they come to church that they cannot get elsewhere.

In addition, children love to see their friends, and many build lasting relationships with their classmates. Regular attendance helps them forge these bonds.

OUR 7 PRINCIPLES

As Unitarian Universalists, we teach that . . .

1. Each and every person is unique and to be respected.
2. All people should be treated fairly and with kindness.
3. Our churches are places where everyone is accepted and where we learn together.
4. Every person is free to search for truth and meaning.
5. All people have the right to think for themselves and vote on issues that concern them.
6. We must work for a world in which there is peace, fairness and freedom.
7. We should respect and care for all parts of our planet Earth.

(This is a children's version of the 7 Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association)

Supporting Our Teachers

Our classroom teachers are members of the Congregation who volunteer their time to prepare lessons and teach on Sunday mornings. Their commitment to your children is what drives our Program. Please support them by helping in the following ways:

1. Pick up your children, from Pre-K through grade **5 at 11:15**; they will not be dismissed from class. Teachers, too, would like to enjoy coffee hour and conversation. Honor them by retrieving your children promptly. Older children will be dismissed from classes and may go directly upstairs.

2. Review appropriate classroom conduct with your children. Our teachers and the RE Committee spend much time and energy creating a safe, supportive, nurturing, and positive atmosphere in the classroom. We expect all children to behave in a manner that fosters these feelings for themselves and their classmates. In addition to our Group Covenant, each teaching team is encouraged to develop a classroom code of conduct with the children. Basic rules of conduct and consideration apply. You can help by acquainting yourself with, and reinforcing the classroom covenant.

3. Spend time in the classroom. Parents are welcome to observe in their child's classroom or to stay for a while to help a new child get adjusted. If you plan to be in the classroom, please identify yourself to the teacher. Also, please ask if you may help. An extra pair of hands is often helpful, especially with younger children.



Helping Children Honor our Sacred Space

In all spaces of our Congregation building we encourage parents to ensure that their children treat their church home with respect. This behavior includes no running, no standing or climbing on chairs/tables, no throwing things, no hitting, and no shouting. If food or drink is spilled, it should be cleaned up.

When children are not in their RE classes, parents are responsible for them. If you observe an unattended child behaving in a disrespectful or potentially harmful manner, please either notify the Director of Lifespan Faith Development or a member of the RE Committee, or simply speak gently to the child and remind him/her of the rules.

Nursery Care

For infants through 4-year-olds, child care is available in our Nursery on the lower level. Your little ones are also welcome to stay with you during the service. If you feel that they are becoming too restless or vocal, you are welcome to use the lobby, which is set up with speakers so you can hear the service.



Our Program — Pre-K through 8th grade

All classes use age-appropriate curricula. This year's theme: Exploring Our UU Faith

Grades K, 1 & 2: “Spirit Play”



Spirit Play is a Unitarian Universalist model of religious education founded on Montessori educational principles, and based in story and ritual, play, and creativity. Spirit Play gives children the tools to make meaning of their lives within Unitarian Universalism; the tools to carry them forward into living an active religious life. Spirit Play helps do that by making the classroom a place for children to explore their spirituality, and giving them the time and the language to talk about it. The idea is to provide the nurturing environment a fledgling spirit needs to grow and develop. And so, the Spirit Play Center isn't just another classroom. Here, we "have all the time we need." Here, we speak softly, because someone might be speaking with the Spirit, and we don't want to disturb them.

Following a story and “wondering questions” there is an opportunity for an Art Response—allowing children to make their own meaning of what they've heard. Stories include our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources, as well as wisdom tales from other faith traditions and cultures, stories of The Mystery, Beginnings and Endings, Sacred Places, and Heroes and Heroines.

3rd/4th/5th : “Toolbox of Faith” and “Love Connects Us”



Toolbox of Faith

What tools does Unitarian Universalism offer for the challenges of life? Toolbox of Faith invites children to reflect on the qualities of our UU faith—such as integrity, courage, and love—as tools they can use in living their lives and building their own faith. Each session uses a tool as a metaphor for an important quality of our faith such as reflection (symbolized by a mirror), integrity (compass), spirit of life (canteen) and justice (a flashlight). Reflecting on the qualities (tools) of our faith, children gain insight into what makes our faith important in their lives, and how they can grow in our faith.

Love Connects Us

In this program, participants learn to seek guidance in life through the lens of our Unitarian Universalist Sources, with an emphasis on love. Together we ask questions such as : “Where did we come from? What is our relationship to the Earth and other creatures? How can we respond with love, even in bad situations? What happens when you die?” Sessions apply wisdom from our Sources to help participants answer these questions. Participants will learn that asking questions is valued in Unitarian Universalism, even as they begin to shape their own answers.

6th/7th/8th: “Heeding the Call,” “Amazing Grace,” and a dash of *The Simpsons*

Heeding the Call: Qualities of a Justice Maker (12 sessions, beginning September 25)

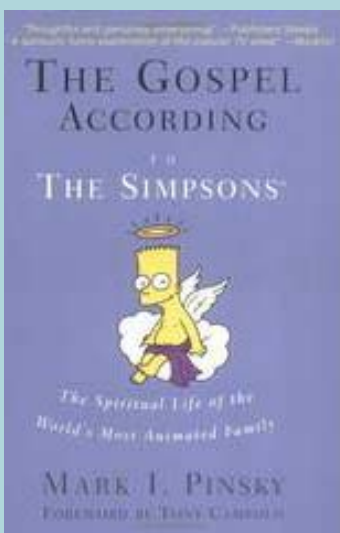


“Workshops on empathy, courage, abundance, joy, and other qualities ask participants to recognize how these standards can be tools for justice. Additionally, the program includes more concrete tools, such as suggestions on how to be a good ally and tips on the language of conflict resolution. True stories of courage, sacrifice and collaboration, role-plays, games, and a program-long justice project will feed youth’s rising realization that as people of faith we are all called to love justice—not just with our words, but also with our deeds. As Unitarian Universalists, we are called not to admire justice from a distance but to live right in it, under its roof. This series of workshops offers a unique opportunity to engage youth in the critical work of developing skills as Unitarian Universalists committed to social justice. The workshops encourage youth to reflect on their own lives while also making connections to the lives lived by others. This both/and approach increases youth’s self-awareness while also developing leadership skills. The stories offer real-life examples of people facing the complexities of living lives of justice. It is under this roof that the youth become Justice Makers. Justice does not come

into being automatically. Individuals must work together, learn together, listen together, laugh together, and heed the call together.” (From the curriculum description.) We will look for opportunities to work with our Social Justice Team.

The Gospel According to the Simpsons (4 sessions, beginning January 22)

Unitarianism and Universalism grew out of Christianity, but most UUs don’t consider themselves to be Christian. In fact, many people come to UUism after leaving their Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, etc. “church of origin.” So, what do Christians believe and how do their beliefs differ or mirror our own? Written for a Christian audience, but taught from our UU perspective, *The Gospel According to the Simpsons* is a unique way to explore concepts of God, heaven, hell, the soul, etc., providing insight on our Christian friends and possibly some family members. And of course we have to watch targeted episodes in order to be able to discuss them. (If you’ve watched *The Simpsons*, you’ll remember Bart selling his soul, born-again-Christian Ned Flanders being scorned by the community, and Homer considering starting his own religion.) A fun program!



Amazing Grace

(12 sessions, beginning February 19)

Amazing Grace helps middle schoolers understand right and wrong and act on their new understanding. Its purpose is to equip them for moving safely and productively through the middle- and high school years, when they will be continually tugged toward both ends of the ethics continuum. Youth will come to recognize and depend on their UU identity and resources as essential to moving toward understanding, independence, and fulfillment of personal promise.



Youth Group

The UFWC Youth Group – open to young people in 9th – 12th grade (ages 14 through 19) – is a vital part of our congregation. The group is bound together in trust, providing freedom to freely share thoughts, hopes, dreams and concerns. Along with providing many opportunities for fun, the Youth Group is a springboard for community service, and for leadership opportunities within the group, the congregation and our District.



At the Philly AIDS Walk

Many of the youth particularly enjoy attending Youth Conferences (“Cons”), held at congregations throughout our local District. A team of adult Youth Advisors helps guide the Youth in their activities. Each of them completes 15 hours of Youth Advisor training prior to working with the Youth.

Our Youth Group is well known in our District – since 2004 it has won ten consecutive YES! (Youth Empowering and Sustaining Congregation) awards, a unique achievement. For more information, please email youth-group@ufwc.org.

**Working with us
this year:**

**Director of Lifespan Faith
Development**

Pam Baxter
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**Religious Education
Committee:**

Committee Chair

Larry Lesser
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Committee Members

Kim Ellerthorpe
Sarah Hyson
Lauren Kelly

For more information, visit
www.ucwc.org

Family RE

Word from some of our parents is that they’d like to be able to spend more Sunday mornings with their children. We think that’s a great idea! So, we’ve scheduled several Sundays for “Family RE” – days when we’ll engage children in PreK through 5th grade and their parents in a group activity. Our ideas so far: Social Action Project • Pancake Sunday • Family Worship • Safe Harbor Meal



RE Schedule — 2016-17 (Nursery through 8th grade)

September 11	Ingathering and Water Communion
September 18	Group RE for PreK through 5th grades
September 25	First Class, for All Grades PreK through 8th
October 2	Class
October 9	Class
October 16	Class
October 23	Class
October 30	Family RE for PreK through 5th -- Putting on a UU Principles Skit Class for 6th/7th/8th
November 6	Class (Time Change)
November 13	Class
November 20	Intergenerational Service: Bread Communion
November 27	Intergenerational: "Deck the Hall" Ornament-making
December 4	Class
December 11	Class
December 18	Class
December 25	No RE (Christmas Day)
January 1	No RE (New Year's Weekend.)
January 8	Class
January 15	Class
January 22	Class
January 29	Class
February 5	Class
February 12	Class
February 19	Family RE for PreK through 5th -- Pancake Sunday Class for 6th/7th/8th
February 26	Class
March 5	Class
March 12	Class (Time Change)
March 19	Class
March 26	Possible Intergenerational Service
April 2	Class
April 9	Class
April 16	Possible Intergen (Easter Sunday)
April 23	Class
April 30	Class
May 7	Class
May 14	Family RE for PreK through 5th -- Cook Safe Harbor meal Class for 6th/7th/8th
May 28	Make Banners/Classroom Cleanup
May 28	No RE (Memorial Day Weekend)
June 4	Intergenerational: RE SUNDAY Celebration of Classes
June 11	Summer Break Begins