

Religious Education for Children at UCWC

September 2017– May 2018

*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 exploring and understanding the religious beliefs of our non-Unitarian Universalist friends and neighbors, and also on exploring and taking an active role in social justice. All of what we do and explore is inspired by our 7 Unitarian Universalist Principles (what we call our Promises) and our 6 Sources. In all our exploring, we learn more about what it means to be Unitarian Universalist.

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.

Please register online at www.ucwc.org.

A Brief Guide to our Building Renovations

During the months of September and October, we will continue to hold services and classes at The Concept School. In November, we will be back in our beautifully renovated historic building. On the lower level, we are looking forward to holding Children’s Worship in our new Chapel, air-conditioning, a kid-sized restroom connected to the Nursery, a library/gathering place for parents, a staircase that leads directly to the new social hall, and many lovely details enhancing the RE classrooms. Come take a look!

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 **promptly at 11:15**; they will not be dismissed from class. 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 or Volunteer 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

PreK through 5th:

The move back into our building is now scheduled the first Sunday in November. This gives us the opportunity to take advantage of the nature trail at The Concept School and use the outdoor space to focus on our 7th UU Principle. Through hands-on interaction with “the great outdoors,” we will explore our relationship to the Earth and our role in understanding, appreciating, and protecting our one great natural resource. We will ground ourselves to where we are.

There are several excellent Earth and nature programs that we are tapping into. They will give us the opportunity to learn some basic science/ecology, create nature-inspired art, and explore a spiritual connection to the Earth through delving into Native American beliefs and traditions. We'll also bring Native American elements into our Children's Worship, honoring Earth, Fire, Water, and Wind.

The RE Schedule as we know it so far:

September 10—Intergenerational Ingathering Service

September 17—RE Classes begin. As described above, we will take advantage of the still-warm weather and the grounds at The Concept School to focus on our 7th UU Principle. We will have Worship and do art activities indoors, going outside for about 15-20 minutes (weather permitting). We will stay on the grassy areas and the nature trail, but closed shoes are advised. Also consider hat and sunglasses.

October Sundays—Toward the end of October we'll take a week or two to work on some once-in-a-lifetime projects, projects to help the children feel invested in our new space. Some of our ideas are:

- creating a wall hanging for the new Children's Worship (Chapel) space.
- making a plaque commemorating the children who are the first to occupy our renovated space
- assembling a time capsule

For the rest of the year, our classes will—in age-appropriate ways—explore our other UU Principles. This will include learning about others' religious/spiritual beliefs and our role as UUs in working toward racial equality and justice.

Tokens of the Earth—While at The Concept School we can't light candles in the classrooms, so we'll use a battery-powered “candle” for our chalice, and items from nature for sharing. Please invite your child to bring with him/her (on their first Sunday back at church) a small stone or shell to use. We'll keep these in a container so that they're available for use every Sunday. We'll have some stones and shells on hand for anyone who forgets or can't find something.

PreK, K, 1st & 2nd Grades: “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 grades: “Harry and UU” : young wizards working toward social justice



If you're familiar with the Harry Potter series, you'll see that each of our 7 Unitarian Universalist Principles (page 2) has a parallel in the Harry Potter adventures.

For example, our 2nd Principle states that all people should be treated fairly and kindly. Many of Harry's friends are shunned by others for a variety of reasons, but Harry treats everyone with dignity.

Our 6th Principle encourages us to work for a peaceful, fair, and free world. Harry and his friends show compassion for others throughout the book and work toward a just world. The entire series of books is a fight for peace, fairness and freedom for all.

Based on J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, “Harry and UU” homes in on our responsibility as Unitarian Universalists to put our principles into action to try and make the world a better place. The goal is to achieve tangible results on real problems facing the world. The class will form Dumbledore's Army and fight real-world Horcruxes, such as Illiteracy, Hunger, Poverty, and Animal Cruelty.

6th/7th/8th Grades: Social Awareness and Social Action

Lodestone: On Race

During the month of October, our middle school students will be engaged in an expanded version of the Unitarian Universalist Association's recommended Teach-In on racism. In particular, the class will explore white privilege. Class topics include the "danger of a single story" that marginalizes whole groups of people, a brief history of racism in our country, what it means to truly listen to another, and finding hope in moving toward an anti-racist society.



5th Dimension: Lessons from The Twilight Zone

November - May— We'll explore a diversity of social issues using episodes of *The Twilight Zone* (viewed in class) as the basis for discussion. *Twilight Zone* creator, Rod Serling, was a Unitarian who believed that controversial messages and dialogues are needed to get important points across. He purposely created a science fiction show to get such messages past corporate censors. The episodes, which ran for five seasons, are timeless and resonate as strongly today as they did in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when they aired. We will also look for ways to put our Unitarian Universalist principles into action in our community.



Youth Group—Grades 9-12

The UFWC Youth 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.

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. For more information, please email youth-group@ufwc.org.

**Working with us
this year:**

**Director of Lifespan Faith
Development**

Pam Baxter
DLFD@ucwc.org

**Religious Education
Committee:**

Committee Chair

Larry Lesser
RE@ucwc.org

Committee Members

Sarah Hyson
Lauren Kelly
Mindy Ross

For more information, visit
www.ucwc.org



At Philly AIDS Walk

RE Schedule — 2017-18 (PreK through 8th grade)

At The Concept School:

September 10	Ingathering and Blessing of Backpacks
September 17	RE Classes Begin
September 24	Class
October 1	Class
October 8	Class
October 15	Class
October 22	Class
October 29	Class

At UCWC:

November 5	Class (Time Change)
November 12	Class
November 19	Intergenerational Service: Bread Communion
November 26	Class
December 3	Class
December 10	Class
December 17	Class
December 24	Intergenerational Service: Christmas Eve
December 31	No RE (New Year's Weekend.)
January 7	Class
January 14	Class
January 21	Class
January 28	Class
February 4	Class
February 11	Class
February 18	Class
February 25	Class
March 4	Class
March 11	Class (Time Change)
March 18	Class
March 25	Possible Intergenerational Service
April 1	Class (Easter Sunday)
April 8	Class
April 15	Class
April 22	Class
April 29	Class
May 6	Class
May 13	Group RE -- Cook Safe Harbor meal
May 20	Make Banners/Classroom Cleanup
May 27	No RE (Memorial Day Weekend)
June 3	End-of Year Party
June 10	Intergenerational: RE SUNDAY Celebration of Classes
June 17	Summer Schedule Begins