

the
First Unitarian

Congregation of Toronto



Sunday Mornings at First

Our program for kids is referred to as "RE" (short for Religious Education). In the rooms beyond our sanctuary on Sundays you might find pre-schoolers singing about making new friends, second graders making a video of a wisdom tale, sixth graders talking with a Jewish guest about their faith, or 7th graders forming a plan to raise money for a local charity. RE is more than classes. Programs include community service, field trips to local houses of worship, working in the garden or creating a musical or artistic offering to present to the congregation. Here, we are a learning community in which teachers are learners and learners are teachers.

We Are Family ...

Social Events Year Round

Watch our e-news for dates of occasional social gatherings hosted by First families.

Share 365 November

Together we support a local family by raising funds to provide a monthly fresh food box.

Family Retreat Late January

Watch our e-news for dates & registration info on this fun-filled weekend in the snow

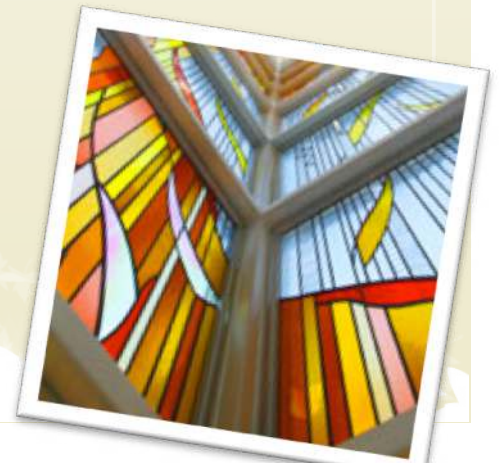
Welcome!

By cultivating the habit of church going, we affirm for our children the value we place on making time to nurture our spiritual lives in a world which is increasingly fast-paced, commercial and secularized.

May you and your family find in this place a deep and sustaining experience of comfort and community, laughter and learning, singing and service.

In faith and with affection,

Angela Klassen
Director of Lifespan
Religious Education



Pre-School to SK



In the Beginning

The nursery at First Unitarian is available every Sunday, and during special events. The nursery introduces children from birth through pre-school to the fun and loving environment of our congregation. Our dedicated adult caregiver Merina, and her teen helper, Daria, are available from 10:15 am to 12:00 noon.



Spirit Play for JK and SK

In this Unitarian Universalist adaptation of a Montessori method, a story which illustrates our UU beliefs and values is presented each week. Story baskets, like the one in the illustration at left, include small objects, which have been lovingly prepared by members of the congregation for this class. Following the story, children are free to choose their “work”; either an art activity to respond to the story or to re-tell a story themselves. The teacher creates a safe and sacred space for children to explore religious and spiritual questions.

Grades 1-5

Children's Chapel + Spirit Quest Workshops

Blending curriculum based, classroom sessions using materials produced by the Unitarian Universalist Association with children's chapel services exploring the monthly congregational theme, and occasional workshops presented by talented members of our congregation, our junior elementary program offers a multi-dimensional approach to religious education based on the theory of multiple intelligences, allowing children to interact with the topics in a variety of ways. For example, drama to re-enact a story captured on video, music making with our own resident musicians, art projects, guided visualization and movement oriented activities from dance to cooking and nature exploration. Topics explore the 7 UU Principles and our 6 Sources. Classroom groups are usually Grades 1-3 and Grades 4-5



FIRST UNITARIAN KID'S PROGRAM



Senior Elementary + Junior High

Neighbouring Faiths

Using video, guest speakers and visits to local houses of worship, each session introduces children to basic beliefs or practices of various faith communities. The program encourages children to value their own cultural, ethnic, and religious identities. Further, it offers experiences for children to learn to respect and appreciate other peoples' identities, and to feel a sense of belonging in the broader community.

It Starts With Me

Our year-long immersion into helping to make the world more livable includes units on community service, social action, charitable giving and caring for the Earth. Children explore social issues and choose three service projects to undertake which involve them in educating themselves and others, advocating for issues, raising funds and hands-on helping.

OWL – Our Whole Lives

Comprehensive, values-based, relationship and sexuality education is offered to youth whose parents enroll them in this program facilitated by trained members of the congregation.

The program provides accurate, developmentally appropriate information on a range of topics including relationships, consent, lovemaking, sexual health, contraception, unplanned pregnancy, gender identity, sexual orientation, social media, pornography, communication and decision-making.

Language and activities are as inclusive as possible of all forms of human diversity.



Coming of Age – Gr 8/9

Coming of Agers work with their facilitator team and approved adult mentors who help youth to examine their values and formulate a “credo” or statement of belief. Topics include: “when bad things happen to good people, “ the mystery which some people call God”, “what happens after we die?”, “diversity”, ‘serving others” “beliefs expressed in music and art”. Social and socially responsible activities are scheduled throughout the term as part of the community building. After meeting with our minister, Rev. Shawn Newton, each student will present their credo at a special Sunday service held in May of years ending in odd numbers to honour this rite of passage.

The Great End in Religious Instruction

In 1837, Unitarian theologian William Ellery Channing condemned catechism as a teaching method for children by proclaiming:

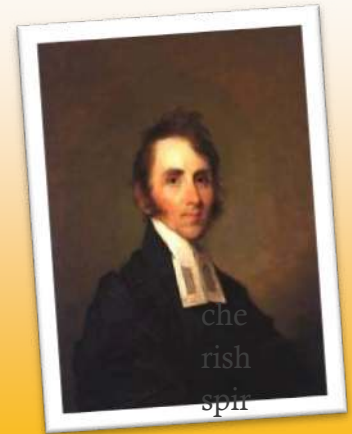
The great end in religious instruction is -

Not to stamp our minds upon the young, but to stir up their own;

Not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own;

Not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth;

In a word, the great end is to awaken the soul, to excite and



Inspired by Channing's words, the Religious Education Committee at First Unitarian developed this "ends statement" to reflect our present-day aspirations.

Through the religious education program of our congregation, we endeavour to nurture children:

Who are equipped with a sustaining knowledge of the beliefs, values, and heritage of Unitarian Universalism;

Who have recognized through being part of a religious community that they are not alone;

Who have an ability to navigate the challenges of human differences with respect and sacred curiosity;

Who are critical thinkers about larger questions of meaning and purpose;

Who have had opportunities to voice and revoice their beliefs on the big questions of life, culminating in the experience of developing a credo;

Who know the nurturing benefit of an every day spiritual practice as a way to calm and centre themselves;

Who know the gifts of living a life of generosity by dedicating a portion of their energy, time, and other resources to needs beyond their own;

Who have an understanding and appreciation for the diversity and similarities of religious practices and beliefs amongst their neighbours;

Who have been taught to honour the sacredness of their bodies and their intimate relationships;

Whose inherent worth and dignity has been respected by a community community that protects their spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being;

Who have been mentored and guided into new ways of seeing the world the world through meaningful relationships with adults in their community;

Who are spiritually prepared to manage the complexities of the world world by leading a life of intention—by learning to "be" as much as to "do";

Who are empowered to be agents for change by working for social social justice in the smallest circles of their lives and the widest circle of



Youth Group – Ages 14 to 20



Our youth group, for young people attending highschool, plans activities for the year in consultation with their volunteer advisors. Their program choices are guided by the recommendations of the Unitarian Universalist Association and include a balance of the following elements:

- Worship
 - Healthy youth-adult relationships
 - Building Community among all members of the group
 - Participating in social action projects
- Learning about our Unitarian Universalism and other worldviews
 - Developing strong youth leadership

The youth group meets every other Sunday after service for an hour beginning at 10:30 a.m. in Room 307. This is a time to connect with UU friends of the same age group and to be part of a growing community.

The youth calendar this year includes hosting other youth at our congregation and travelling to regional youth conferences in southern Ontario.

Some of our youth have already taken up leadership roles in the wider UU community – as counselors or CITs at camps and as staff at UU youth conferences.

In addition to Youth Group activities, youth are active members of our congregation and important contributors to various aspects of congregational life including

- teaching or helping with children's RE classes,
- babysitting toddlers in our nursery,
- participating as readers, testimony-givers or service leaders in the Sunday service,
- collaborating with our Director of Congregational Music, Dallas Bergen, in presenting music,
- attending worship with others in our community.

Several youth have made commitments to help in the nursery and RE classes this year. Congregational involvement is a great way to build inter-generational connections, earn volunteer hours for high school credit, to gain leadership skills and to obtain employment references from congregational volunteers and staff.



