

Welcome! Ours is a religion that celebrates diversity of belief and is guided by our shared values. Our congregations are places where we gather to nurture our spirits and put our faith into action through social justice work in our communities and the wider world. We value the spiritual journeys of each individual and believe that there is no “right” way to lead a religious life. For us, religion is ultimately not about what we think; it’s about how we live our lives.

We encourage our members to draw inspiration and wisdom from all of the world’s great faiths. The ultimate truth each of us seeks about creation, life, death, God, meaning, and the human condition cannot be captured in any statement of faith. Out of a combination of reflection and experience, each of us shapes our own personal faiths.

Each Unitarian Universalist congregation is independent and has its own statements that bind it as a religious community and determine how we walk with one another here.

Our Unitarian Universalist Principles & Purposes

Seven principles which UU congregations affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- 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.

Unitarian Universalism draws from many sources:

- 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 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 inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- 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, & warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life & instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

COVENANT OF RIGHT RELATIONS

First Unitarian Church of Wilmington

(Adopted at the Annual Meeting, May 18, 2008)

With a sincere desire that our congregation flourish, I promise:

to **be mindful to nurture** my own spiritual health, so that I may help bring a spirit of balance and wholeness to our church community;

to **be attentive** to guests and new members as well as supporting and encouraging those whom I already know, thereby contributing to an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality;

to **seek to understand** others with humility and an open mind, and interact with my fellow UU members with integrity and respect;

to **use wisdom and patience** in challenging or conflicting situations, and to seek honest reconciliation while recognizing we may not always come to agreement;

to **be involved**, knowing that my skills, resources, wisdom and good will are important to my church community;

to **uphold our covenant** to each other in our interactions in the wider community, as exemplars of our empowering faith.

I join with others in this covenant as we seek to become known for our vitality, warmth, and transformative energy.

VALUES, MISSION, ENDS

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF WILMINGTON, DEL.

APPROVED BY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

AUGUST 20, 2012

OUR VALUES:

At First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, Del., we work to embody:

Love and Compassion,
Growth and Discovery,
Freedom and Justice,
Wonder and Joy.

OUR MISSION:

First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, Del., is a beloved community that nourishes minds and spirits, fights injustice, and transforms the world through loving action.

OUR ENDS:

At First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, Del.,
people of all ages:

- Feel safe, accepted, and loved—and empowered to be our authentic selves.
- Gain new perspectives and grow as informed, spiritual human beings.
- Act on our shared values and Unitarian Universalist identity to fight for a more just world.
- Experience wonder, inspiration, fulfillment, and joy.

Frequently Asked Questions

In addition to the church website, regular sources of information about what is going on at the church include the monthly newsletter Quest, the news insert in the Sunday order of service, and the weekly broadcast E-news and special topic emails. To get you started, here are a few frequently asked questions.

Q: When is worship on Sunday? We have one worship service on Sunday at 10:30 am throughout the year.

Q: What else happens on a Sunday at church? In addition to the worship service, there is a time for sharing coffee and often other snacks following the service in Parish Hall. It is sometimes jokingly called the worship after the worship! Before worship there is also adult religious programming, starting at 9:30. The Faithful Dialogues and Adult Forum programs cover a variety of topics – please see the church news for more details. And often there are other events that happen on Sundays that you are more than welcome to join.

Q: What should I [and my children] wear to church? Anything! Some folks dress up a bit for Sundays while others wear blue jeans. It is totally up to you.

Q: Is there childcare or Sunday School during church on Sunday? Every Sunday includes children’s programming. From September through May, children come into the sanctuary for the first part of service and then leave the service in order to go to their religious exploration classes. You are always welcome to keep your children with you in the service. Childcare is available in the Youth Center until 12:30 on Sundays so that you can linger in coffee hour after the worship service.

Q: If my child doesn't separate well, can she or he stay with me in the service?

Yes, your child is always welcome to stay with you in the worship service. If you need to leave the sanctuary with them for any reason, the video and audio for the service are streamed into the Warner Room beside Parish Hall.

Q: Where do I park at the church? Parking is available in a few different areas, depending on when you are coming. Weekday evenings, you can park in the lot behind the building on Halstead and enter the building through that entrance. During a weekday, please park along Halstead and enter the church through the office entrance. In addition to these areas on Sundays, you can park in the larger lot at Whitby and Concord Pike.

Q: Are any of the events only for members or certain people? All of the events advertised in our news are open to anyone who would like to attend, unless otherwise indicated in the announcement. There are also some ongoing groups that have certain sign-up periods, like our Connection Circles, however these are available for new members at any time.

Q: Which door do I go in? During the weekday, please enter the side entrance towards the church office. On weekday evenings after 6pm, come in the door in the church parking lot on Halstead. On Sundays or for events in the sanctuary, you can also come in through the main sanctuary doors, the ones on Whitby with the sculptures.

Q: Are there any people of different racial backgrounds in this congregation? Are people of different racial backgrounds welcome here? There are people of a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds present in the church. People of any racial background are absolutely welcome to participate and join the church!

Q: Are there bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgendered people here? Are they welcome? People of a variety of affectional orientations and identities are absolutely welcome here! You'll find a lot of diversity present & celebrated here.

Q: Are there people in the congregation who believe in certain things?

Unitarian Universalists are very diverse in what they believe. You will find a wide variety of different beliefs here that often get talked about. Our goal is making and honoring space for each individual's journey and the beliefs that they find and hold.

Q: What goes on during the worship services? Our services have many traditional elements of church services. There are a number of hymns that are sung, there is usually special music, either performed by our choir, groups of singers, or visiting musicians, there are readings and meditations, and a sermon or reflection of some sort offered usually by one of our ministers. During most of the year, the kids start out in the service and then leave for their classes after the Time for All Ages, usually a story, skit, or children's sermon.

Q: Do summer worship services differ from the rest of the year? Summer is an exciting time to come and here a variety of different voices and perspectives to lead worship. The kids start out in the Youth Center rather than the sanctuary and will be doing their own thing for the entire service. And our sanctuary does have air conditioning!

Q: How many UU's are there, and how does our church compare with others?

This depends on who you ask. Nationwide there are about 200,000 Unitarian Universalists, as extrapolated from US Census data. Our church has about 400 members, and is on the large-medium size compared to other UU congregations.

Q: What is pastoral care at First Unitarian? Pastoral care is the caring work done by our minister, staff, and trained lay people to support and care for those in our congregation who are experiencing a difficult time. This includes supportive conversations, visits in the hospital, home, or care facilities, help with rides or meals, and specialized groups. If you or someone in your family is experiencing a difficult time, please let Rev. Finkelstein know.

Q: What are booster cards? (they keep getting mentioned in the newsletter!)

Booster cards are gift cards to a variety of different stores that can be purchased at the church. The church gets a percentage of the cost of the card when they are acquired, and you purchase the gift card for the value of the card. It's a great way to give money to the church without costing you anything! They can be purchased in Parish Hall on Sundays or in the church office during the week.

Q: There are too many acronyms! What do some of them stand for?

First U is a common abbreviation for First Unitarian. The UUA is the Unitarian Universalist Association, our national offices. The JPD is the Joseph Priestley District, the district offices (located here in Wilmington) and named after scientist and Unitarian minister Joseph Priestley who discovered oxygen. CYRE is our children and youth religious exploration program. And if there are any more that are confusing you, then we are using too many of them!

Q: Does the church receive any money from the denomination?

No, not at all. Unitarian Universalist congregations support themselves financially through contributions from their own membership. In fact, we pay dues to the national association and district to support them.

Q: I've heard the term "Policy Governance," which sounds complicated. What does this mean? This is the way that our church has chosen to structure how decisions are made. Our board of trustees, elected by the congregation, identifies the mission and direction of the church and sets policies about how it should be run. Then the church staff, supported by many teams of church members, makes the operational decisions to run the church.

Q: Can I get married or have my child dedicated at the church? What about having a memorial service here? Absolutely! Our ministers are available for a variety of rites of passage. We'd love to talk further about it – please ask us!

Q: What can I do to find out what's going on at the church? The best places to look are on the church website (www.firstuuwilm.org), our Facebook site (<https://www.facebook.com/firstuuwilm?fref=ts>) in the news insert in the program every Sunday, and in the news that is e-mailed out, including the weekly news, other weekly emails, and the monthly newsletter, also available on the church website. Another way of hearing about what is going on is being here on Sundays and talking with folks.

Special Events & Traditions at First Unitarian

Special church services during the year include:

- **Ingathering** is our opening service in September that celebrates the beginning of the new church year; often there is a potluck lunch on the church grounds after the service
- **Big Music Sunday** services, which are devoted to special music, happen at different times of the year and are frequently a full house
- Services that feature our children and youth include Coming of Age Sunday, Age of Reason Sunday, and Youth Sunday
- **Easter** Sunday typically features special music and is thematically connected with the Easter holiday
- We have two worship services on **Christmas Eve**:
 - Family Service at 4pm – an intergenerational service featuring Christmas songs and stories
 - Candlelight Service at 9:45pm – a traditional Christmas Eve service featuring religious Christmas carols and candles lit to *Silent Night*
- **Intergenerational** worship services welcome all ages in attendance and happen at various times of the year. These include an Earth Day service and some of our special children's services.

Other Traditional Church Events include:

- Our **annual cluster retreat** is in early fall and is a weekend of gathering at a relatively local park and campground for UU churches in our area
- Our **church auction** happens every other year and is a fun event with both friendly competition and community

Benefits & Expectations of Membership

Benefits of Membership

- *Beloved Community* means a place where we can live out our gifts & passions in order to make a difference. In turn we receive the warmth and inspiration of being a part of a spiritual community that helps us grow and nurtures us in times of need.
- *Voting Privilege to Set Vision and Budget*—When making the commitment of membership to the church you gain the right to make significant decisions in the life of the church.
- *Access to Ministers and Church Ministries*—The ministers of the church serve members in various ways, providing on-going support to all members of First Unitarian Church. This includes rites of passage at no charge.
- *Access to Leadership Roles*—Members of the church are eligible to take significant leadership roles in the life of the church. This is an excellent way to have your vision for the church and Unitarian Universalism come to life.

Expectations of Membership

- *Participate in worship*—Worship is the central act of any religious community. By coming to worship on a regular basis, you are creating the beloved community and making space for your own spiritual transformation.
- *Develop a spiritual practice*—In addition communal worship, we each experience transformation in our own unique way. Explore various programs at First Unitarian to uncover or deepen a spiritual practice that speaks to you.
- *Join in service to the community and to the world*—Church is not an end in itself but here to transform the world. We need people to help us; we can do more together as an institution than we can do separately.
- *Pledge your “gifts” and money*—Community is about commitment. To be transformed by church, we both receive and give resources of time, talent, and treasure.

Getting Your Feet Wet at First Unitarian Church

Want to meet more people? Want to try it out without a long-term commitment? Here are some ideas about service and participation for you....

Be a Greeter: If you chat with people easily, can point out bathrooms, and smile, you can be a greeter. It's a great way to meet people, too.

Be an Usher: You're here on Sunday morning anyway, so here's an easy way to help out. Distribute orders of service, count people, count money, light the starter candle for the chalice – it's easy!

Help Out in the Office: The office staff loves it when people volunteer to serve as receptionist. Get to see behind the scenes of church life.

Assist at an event like the Auction: This gets you here on a day *other* than Sunday, and that's good! If you are shy, working alongside others is a great ice-breaker.

Cook or Serve for Emmanuel Dining Room: If you don't mind the smell of chicken, come and help prepare the casseroles that we bring to Emmanuel Dining Room each month. Cooking is on the 19th of the month here in the church kitchen, and we serve at EDR on the 20th. Not only will you cook, but there's lots chatting at the same time.

Paint, fix, sort, and clean: Every so often, we tackle the big jobs we've been avoiding – like organizing supply closets or spiffing up the Sunday school classrooms. We'll put you to work; and if you're handy.....well, be careful telling us that. We get giddy with such information.

Help out with materials for our religions exploration classes: Our kids' classes work with lots of fun stuff! Come and help prepare materials for upcoming Sundays.

Email Nancy Pinson for more information, membership@firstuunilm.org

What's Happening at First Unitarian

There is a lot going on at First Unitarian – some folks call it the “big church wow factor.” Making sense of it all can be a bit overwhelming at first. Here's a little break down to help get you started finding somewhere that's right for you. For most current information, see the church calendar in the church office.

Weekly Programs:

Monday evenings Yoga – 7 pm in Brunner Chapel
Wednesday evenings Open Heart Zen Sangha – 7 pm in Brunner Chapel
Thursday evenings Concert Choir – 7 pm in Music Room
Sunday mornings Faithful Dialogues – 9:30 am in Brunner Chapel
Adult Forum Discussion – 9:30 am in Room 25

Group activities: <http://www.firstuuwilm.org/groups>

Caring & Support Groups:

3rd Wednesday Living Well with Chronic Illness – 1:30 pm in church library
2nd and 4th Tuesdays Caregivers' Support Group – 7 pm in member's home

Social Justice & Environmental Programs:

Emmanuel Dining Room – cooking on 19th, serving on 20th of each month
Dismantling the New Jim Crow – program info at www.dismantlenjic.org
Independent Living for Young Adults (ILYA) – email Lois Morris lcm2unow@yahoo.com
Green Sanctuary – 1st Wed Oct/Dec/Jan/April at 7 pm in church library
New Castle County Congregations of Delaware Interfaith Power and Light (NC3 of DeIPL) – contact Chad Tolman chadtolman@verizon.net

Social Justice Connector: <https://firstusocialaction.wordpress.com/>

Learning More About Unitarian Universalism

Our church library (on the first floor, just before you get to the elevator), is open every Sunday morning. Please stop by and take a look!

Here are some introductory titles & ideas for going further:

Questions for the Religious Journey – by George Kimmich Beach (230.91)

A Chosen Faith – by John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church (289.1)

The ABC's for UU Newcomers: A Brief Intro to UU – by William Cleary (289.1)

Challenge of a Liberal Faith, by George N. Marshall (289.1)

Being Liberal in an Illiberal Age, by Jack Mendelsohn (289.132)

The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide, various authors (289.132)

Universalism 101: God is Love, by Richard Trudeau (289.1)

Some titles on UU history and theology:

The Larger Faith: A Short History of Universalism in America, by Charles Howe (289.1)

Prophetic Sisterhood, by Cynthia Grant Tucker (289.178)

Universalists & Unitarians in America, by John A. Buehrens (289.173)

Anything by James Luther Adams (around 230)

Anything by Forrest Church (around 248)

Religious Exploration for Children & Youth

Our children and youth affirm their identity as members of the Unitarian Universalist faith community, embrace their evolving spirituality, and practice Unitarian Universalist values in all facets of their lives.

Sunday Morning Schedule: September - May

- 9:30 am Childcare Opens – Childcare is available in the Youth Center for newborns to 11 year olds
- 10:30 am Worship begins – All ages begin in the sanctuary. (Children in childcare will be walked to the sanctuary and sit in the first two rows at 10:25.)
- 10:45 am Children, Religious Exploration Guides, Assistants, and Advisors walk to their Religious Exploration Activities.
- 11:30 am Coffee Hour – After the worship service adults are invited to socialize during the coffee hour in Parish Hall.
- 11:55 am Activities end – Parents may pick up Nursery through Seekers from their classrooms, if not picked up, they are brought to the youth center; Questers, Explorers and Youth may go to Parish Hall or hang out in Room 30.
- 12:30 pm Childcare Closes – pick up children in Youth Center by 12:30

Nursery (Infants – 3 year olds): a warm and caring environment in the Nursery

Rainbow Walkers (4 – 7 year olds): learning UU Principles thru stories, games, and art

Seekers (7 – 9 year olds): exploring how UU translates into everyday choices and actions

Questers (9 – 11 year olds): Action Quest, Inner Quest, UU Quest, and Mystery Quest

Explorers (11 – 13 year olds): exploring life’s big questions and search for meaning

Coming of Age (13 – 15 year olds): Year-long program focused on providing opportunities to explore beliefs & values, as well as individual strengths & weaknesses

Senior Youth Group (14 – 18 year olds): welcoming and engaging environment that supports teens in social, emotional, and spiritual growth. Youth Group takes place on Sunday evenings.

Where to Look for More Information

...about the church

<http://www.firstuuwilm.org>

...about Unitarian Universalism

<http://www.uua.org>

<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/index.shtml>

...about our children's and youth religious programming

<http://firstuuwilm.org/children-youth-religious-exploration-cyre>

<https://sites.google.com/site/firstuuwilmcyre/>

...about programs and groups at the church

<http://www.firstuuwilm.org/groups>