

# **MONITORING REPORT: Ends Achievement Report End #2 January 2018**

**END #2: At First Unitarian Church of Wilmington, Delaware, people of all ages gain new perspectives and grow as informed, spiritual human beings.**

**Our interpretation of this End is unchanged from previous years.**

Almost all of the programs at First Unitarian Church apply to all of the Ends. We focus in this report on the programs that *primarily* accomplish this End.

**Children and Youth Religious Exploration** - In the 2017/2018 church year, First Unitarian Church of Wilmington has 67 children and youth registered. This number includes 9 newborns – 3 year old in the Nursery. This is the largest number we have had registered in our nursery in many years. 15 youth are regularly attending and participating in youth group. In addition to regular CYRE programs, 16 eighth, ninth and tenth graders are participating in OWL and 15 eighth and ninth graders are participating in the Coming of Age Rite of Passage.

**Nursery** (Infants – 3 years) Infants and toddlers enjoy their Sunday mornings playing with our childcare workers in the Nursery. Our volunteers provide a warm and caring environment during worship services in the Nursery. Age appropriate toys, crafts and stories are provided. Children gain a sense of belonging to their religious community and can begin to build friendships in a sacred community.

**Rainbow Walkers** (PreK4 - 1st grade) are introduced to Unitarian Universalism through multi-sensory stories and spiritual work. They begin each morning with a Sharing Circle where they “light” a battery operated chalice and participate in Unitarian Universalist rituals. Then they share a story. After sharing snack together, children choose their own spiritual work from a variety of options including art materials, blocks, story baskets and other materials.

**Seekers** (2nd grade - 4th grade) are attending Hogwarts this year and learning about social responsibility! Focusing on a Harry Potter theme, we are using fun wizarding activities as the basis for discussions about values, social action, and our Seven Principles. Seekers will learn about and work on real world social action projects, referred to as “horcruxes”.

**Explorers Room 30** (5th grade - 7th grade) are exploring social justice and social action from a UU perspective! We will examine social justice issues occurring in our world right now and

participate in a variety of social action projects. Some of the topics we will consider include poverty, hunger, climate change, food inequality, oppression and immigration.

We are particularly pleased with the way the Seekers and Explorers have been able to integrate their learning and their projects into the larger community. The ‘Trick or Treat’ for hunger alleviation and the Guest at Your Table project are examples of how CYRE projects are brought into Sunday worship and involve the larger congregation.

**Coming of Agers** (8th grade - 9th grade) Coming of Age is a Unitarian Universalist rite of passage focused on providing opportunities for youth to explore beliefs and values, as well as individual gifts, strengths and weaknesses. The program is designed to be mentally and physically challenging. It aids rising youth in their personal growth and understanding of self; culminating with an Affirmation Worship Service. This group will meet every other week. On Sundays the group does not meet, 8th graders are welcome to attend the worship service or volunteer at church. 9th graders may participate in Youth Group or choose to participate as mentioned above.

**Youth Group** (9th grade - 12th grade) Youth Group will meet every other week, rotating with Coming of Age. Youth Group is led by elected youth leaders in partnership with the Director of Religious Education and adult advisors. Activities form a balance of social action, faith formation, worship experiences, and opportunities to gather for fun and friendship. The Youth Group is very excited about their planned service/learning trip to West Virginia this spring.

**Adult Religious Education** – Due to dwindling attendance and competition from specialized programs, the Adult Religious Education Team has decided to disband. The Sunday morning Adult Forum will continue independently. Several of the Social Justice Task Forces have made regular adult education programs part of their ongoing work. Examples are the Sustainability week-end held last fall with programming for all ages, and the ongoing racial justice/white supremacy programming. The Refugee Task Force partnered with Jewish Family Services to present a film series on the challenges of refugees across the globe.

Most of the adults who participate in religious growth and learning programs choose to attend either Soul Matters groups or other small group ministries.

**Soul Matters** – Currently we have 4 Soul Matters groups who meet at the church, and one that meets via Zoom, and one that meets at Maris Grove. In addition, the Women’s Spirituality Group uses Soul Matters for one of their two monthly meetings.

**Other Small Groups** - There are several Connections Circles that continue to meet using an older format. In addition we have several small groups that focus on a particular theological or spiritual practice. Examples: Brown Bag Groups and Open Heart Zen Sangha.

**From the Pulpit** – We note that on a number of occasions the distinction between worship and spiritual growth and learning has been erased by Sunday morning programs such as the White Supremacy Teach-In and the Promise and the Practice service. We see these as valuable opportunities for the entire congregation to engage and grow as informed, spiritual human beings.

**ASSESSMENT:** We report achievement of End #2.