ABOUT THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST FFRE PROGRAM:

Our Purpose Statement:

First Universalist’s Faith Formation and Religious Education (FFRE) programs welcome everyone into our vibrant, safe, and caring community. While encouraging critical thinking, we celebrate life’s spiritual, intellectual, and personal journey’s.

Child Friendly UU 7 Principles
We will use the child friendly version in most classrooms (see the adult version at www.uua.org):

1. Each person is important. 2. Be kind in all you do. 3. We’re free to learn together. 4. We search for what is true. 5. All people need a voice. 6. Build a fair and peaceful world. 7. We care for Earth’s lifeboat.

UU Seven Sources
We explore our seven principles through seven sources:

- Source of Wonder and Mystery. The sense of wonder we all share.
- Source of Inspiring People. Women and men of long ago and today whose lives remind us to be courageously loving.
- Source of World Regions. Ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world’s religions including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and more.
- Source of Judeo-Christian Traditions. Jewish and Christian teachings which tell us to love all others as we love ourselves.
- Source of Reason and Science. The use of reason and the discoveries of science help us understand the world and connect with it.
- Source of Our Sacred Earth. The harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life should be honored and protected.
- Source of Unitarian Universalist History and Heroes. The people and events that have shaped our faith.

**Things You Need To Know:**

**Registration**

To register, we ask that you:

- Read the website or the program guide. This will help you understand how we work and what is available for each age group of children/youth.
- Complete an Annual Registration —fill out the electronic version on our website. Each family must be registered annually, to update our information and provide accurate information to the UUA.
- Connect with Service Opportunities. Our volunteers are vital to providing a faith formation program that will serve our young people for their entire lives. There are opportunities for all talent and time levels. Every parent is expected to participate in the Four for FFRE program.

**What is Four for FFRE?**

Four for FREE is our way of asking every community member to volunteer a minimum of four times throughout the year. This is not limited to parents, we hope to have all members volunteer four times. There are a number of different ways to volunteer including Peaceful Play and Traditions and Music.

- **Peaceful Play**- This is when we have blanket on the floor near the front right side of the stage. Kids are invited to sit here and play silently with the provided toys during service. We need two adults to sit with kids and remind them not to talk or play loudly.
- **Traditions and Music**-This is a new addition to the children’s programing. John and Sara will be bringing a music Sunday experience down to the kids on the 2nd Sunday. We will need two adults to be with the kids and help maintain the group while John and Sara teach.

**How Parents Help Our FFRE Program Work:**

- Volunteer - There are many things you can do to ensure your kids have a fantastic experience when they come to church. We can’t do it without you and they deserve a great faith experience!
Contact Yvonne, Claire, Linda, or Meghan for opportunities. Our Four For FFRE program asks that every parent volunteer a minimum of four times throughout the year.

- **Attend regularly on Sundays** - Supporting your child(ren) through regular attendance will help them gain the full educational and social benefits of being a part of a learning community. Children have strong social needs and regular attendance helps them make connections with other students and feel like they are an important part of their class.

- **Attend special events with your child** - We offer a wide variety of family and multi-generational events that are fun, social times for both kids and parents. Attending these together offers your family a chance to build friendships and a sense of community.

- **Learn about what your kids are learning** - We encourage you to learn more about our program and what your child(ren) are learning. By doing this, you will be able to more actively participate in and reinforce your child(ren)’s faith formation journey. For children in Pre-3rd grade, the Soul Matters curriculum uses the same monthly themes as the adults see in service. That may be an easy conversation starter.

- **Become a First Universalist Member or Friend** - The FFRE program at our church costs over $120,000 (or $300 per child) a year to operate. For this reason, we ask parents to become a Member or Friend of First Universalist to help sustain our programs. If you are not already a member please contact Sarah Libert at sarah@firstuniversalist.org or 303-759-2770 Ext. 47 or to learn more about the meaning and benefits of membership.

**Sick Child Policy**

In our effort to protect the health of the entire First Universalist community, we ask that parents abide by the following guidelines. Please do not bring your child/ren to church if they have any of these symptoms:

- A temperature over 100
- Green nasal discharge
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the prior 24 hours
- Persistent coughing and/or sneezing
- Pink Eye / Conjunctivitis (if child has not been on medication for at least 24 hours)
- Any contagious illness or rash. If a volunteer, greeter, childcare worker, or staff member observe a child with these symptoms they may ask that the child’s parent to take them home.

**Safety Is First** - We ask that you take some time as a family to discuss the following. Keeping everyone safe while attending worship or FFRE is a top priority. We will review these practices periodically throughout the church year.

- **Watch Out for Each Other** - we do our best to look after one another and ensure everyone is safe.
- **Stay with the Group** - leave classroom or building only with permission and appropriate supervision
- **Kind Play Only** - rough play is not appropriate inside church.
- **Walking Feet** - please no running inside the church.
- **Grounded Feet** - please keep your feet on the ground. Do not swing on the railings or sit on the tables. We don’t want anyone slipping off and getting hurt.
- **Kitchen Safety** - please keep children out of the kitchen area unless they are accompanied by an adult.
• Be Aware - when the children are not in the Nursery or a scheduled class, parents need to be responsible for their children and their whereabouts.

Early Childhood
Our Very Littlest - 6 months & younger
Our very littlest members and visitors are invited and welcome to join their parents/guardians in worship. If you prefer you are welcome to be with your child in the Nursery, where you can interact with our caregivers and other small children or sit in Friendship Hall where services can be heard through audio speakers.

Nursery and Toddler Care
6 months to 2yrs
9:15 am and 11:00am
Our priority is to ensure that children feel safe and secure. Our trained, paid and volunteer caregivers offer consistency and guidance. We provide a space that is clean, safe and joyful where infants and toddlers can explore their world while being cared for and loved.

The nursery opens at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings and 15 minutes before all services. Please note that some events at the church require an RSVP for childcare. Please plan ahead when making plans to attend a special event or class offering.

Our childcare staff will gladly work with parents to help resolve separation issues. Please pick up your children promptly following programming. Even if you are staying for an afternoon event or class, picking your child up for lunch and checking in helps them feel connected to you, and allows our staff to prepare for the next childcare session.

When You Arrive
• Each child, 6 months and up, are required to have a Registration or Visitor Form on file. This maintains our best practices regarding safety.
• Complete the sign in sheet information when dropping off your child, including a cell number where you can be reached and your intended destination in the church. (Please keep your silenced cell close by in case we need to reach you by text.)
• Make sure your child has a name tag and that all belongings are labeled with your child’s name, especially diaper bags.
• Speak with the caregivers about food and drink as we often provide water and simple snack to toddlers.
• If you are sending a sippy cup or bottle for your child please put their name on it.
• Parents are welcome to stay for a few minutes to help their children settle in. The worship service may also be heard via the speakers in Friendship Hall.
• A parent or guardian must be in the building whenever the child is in programming.

Transitioning to Pre-K
In September and January, we will offer transition times to help our toddlers move to preschool-aged programming, depending on developmental readiness and age of the child. Our childcare coordinator is available to answer questions or concerns about this process. Please do not hesitate to contact us. We gladly invite parents to spend some time helping us transition your child.
Preschool 3 & 4 year olds

Children will be using the Soul Matters curriculum, learning about the same themes being discussed in the service, through story, songs, arts & crafts, and games.

When You Arrive

- Each child is required to have a Registration or Visitor Form on file. This maintains our best practices regarding safety.
- Complete the sign in sheet information when dropping off your child, including a cell number where you can be reached and your intended destination in the church. (Please keep your silenced cell close by in case we need to reach you by text.)
- Make sure your child has a name tag and that all belongings are labeled with your child’s name.
- Speak with the caregivers about food and drink as we often provide water and simple snack to toddlers.
- Parents are welcome to be present in the classroom for a few minutes to help their children settle in.
- A parent or guardian must be in the building whenever the child is in programming; and pick the child up from the classroom at the end of the program.

Primary

K- 3rd grade children will be using the Soul Matters curriculum. They will be learning about the same themes that are being discussed in service through story, songs, arts & crafts, and games.

4th grade students will be using the Bible Quest curriculum to learn about key stories and ideas in the Bible. This class will give students a basic understanding of the Bible and help them develop their critical thinking skills so that they are able to engage in conversation about the Bible, it’s stories, themes, and ideas.

5th - 6th Building Bridges / Amazing Grace / Riddle & Mystery (2 year cycle)

This year, we will be doing year A of a two year program cycle. Year A includes the Amazing Grace and Riddle & Mystery programs which help students to grapple with the big questions in life and look into the human drive for religion and higher powers. Year B is our Building Bridges curriculum where major world religions are briefly studied and compared to Unitarian Universalism. Building Bridges sometimes includes field trips to other houses of worship to make connections with other faiths.

- When you arrive at church please sign your child in at the FFRE Kiosk and collect your child’s name tag.
- This year all students in grades K-6th grade will begin the morning by attending the first 15 minutes of worship with their families; they will be dismissed from the sanctuary, meet their teachers in the hall, and proceed to their classrooms.
- Preschool- 4th grade students should be picked up in their classroom. Please sign your child out.
7th Grade Coming of Age

11 am - noon

The Coming of Age (CoA) program is designed to honor the transition between childhood and youth. This vibrant class focuses on youth and each of their unique journeys on the road to adulthood. It is a transformative experience that includes learning, testing, ritual, and celebration.

Our goals are to: 1) provide youth with the tools to begin intentionally shaping their own spiritual lives, 2) encourage youth to create their own “empowering stories,” and 3) create a space and time for deep authentic relationships among youth, advisors, and the congregation.

The culminations of the class are a two-night Spring Retreat (in April), where they youth spend quiet time away from electronics to explore their own beliefs, and the Coming of Age Service. These beliefs are then turned into Belief Statements or projects which are shared with the congregation in the CoA Service in May after which they are welcomed into the congregation as adults. It is an experience that youth and parents alike rave about.

To get the most out of the class, consistent weekly participation is strongly encouraged. The youth need to be able to create trusting, team relationships with their advisors and fellow classmates.

As students enter the 9th grade YRUU program they will review their statement of faith or faith project to examine how their faith/beliefs have grown and changed since the completion of CoA. Students who are preparing to Bridge at the completion of their 12th grade year will review both their original CoA statement/project and their 9th grade updates to see where they are now, to look at how their ideas have grown and changed over time, as a way to help them prepare for whatever life journey waits ahead.

8th Grade OWL

Our Whole Lives (OWL): Sexuality & Your Life Sunday 10:30-12pm

Our Whole Lives: Sexuality and Your Life is a comprehensive twenty-six session sexuality education course produced by the UUA and the United Church of Christ, and offered in a majority of UU churches nationwide. The course is designed to facilitate: 1) an understanding of the dynamics of sexuality in their lives, 2) the ability to communicate about sexual concerns and issues with parents and peers, 3) communication skills essential for emotional intimacy, and 4) building strong foundations for making healthy, safe, and responsible decisions about sexuality and relational behavior. Classes are led by four comprehensively trained OWL teachers, female and male, in a safe environment in which to explore sensitive issues with honesty and integrity.

Parents of teens must attend an orientation session so that they can give informed consent if their teenager chooses to participate in the course.

Youth Program - 9th to 12th Grades

11am - noon

YRUU Youth Group meetings provide all our 9th- 12th grade youth a safe place to share thoughts and feelings, explore, learn, and build lifelong friendships together. Sunday Class is a combined Youth and Advisor Led program with FFRE Staff support. Sunday Classes provide an in-depth experience with the monthly themes chosen by youth, advisors, and staff. Youth are empowered and encouraged to work with the FFRE Program Director and Adult Advisors to develop and deliver a balanced program.
Sanctuary Sunday Every 3rd Sunday the youth are invited to attend worship followed by a 30-minute Donut Debrief. This is a time to discuss what they heard in the service, what their questions are, and what if anything they feel moved to do in response to what they heard.

Monthly Activities: Monthly activities such as social events, service projects, and movies will be offered each month. Information about these activities will be emailed out to parents and students as well as posted on various social media sites.

MDD Youth Conferences (CONs) and Events
Youth Conferences are offered to our active youth members, district rules stipulate that a student must attend a minimum of once a month, by our Mountain Desert District and Pacific Western Region. These conferences offer a safe, yet challenging environment for youth to participate in a larger group of UU youth than what is available at church each Sunday.

Conferences are planned and led by youth, with adults who offer guidance and are there to work together with the youth leaders in a ratio of at least one adult for every seven youth. Topics range from social justice to self-image to bridging (graduating). Check out the MDD Youth Ministry Website for more information. It’s a great way to meet kids your own age with liberal UU ideals!

Overall Schedule:

The 2018-2019 schedule will be as follows:

**9:15am Service:**
- PreK - 3rd Grade Soul Matters
- 4th Grade Bible Quest
- 5-6th Year A: Amazing Grace - Exploring right & wrong
  Riddle & Mystery - Exploring the big questions

**11 am Service:**
- PREK-K grade Soul Matters
- 1st - 6th grade Soul Matters Rotation
- 7th Grade - COA
- 8th Grade - OWL - they will begin at 10:30am
- 9-12th Grade - YRUU

The First Universalist Faith Formation and Religious Education [FFRE] Staff
Youth Mentor:
Claire Reifert – Claire@firstuniversalist.org

I am very excited to be moving into my second year as Youth Mentor and to continue working more directly with the youth of our congregation. My favorite jobs and volunteer opportunities have always been those involving young people, from my first job teaching snowboarding in the Eskimo Ski Club, to coaching the “Flying Monkeys” FIRST LEGO League team as a young adult, I’ve always loved helping young people find and develop their talents. Although I’ve been working with the FFRE program for 2 years now, most of my work has been coordinating with parents and volunteers. I really look forward to being able to focus more of my time on building relationships with the teens of First Universalist. In my spare time, I enjoy reading, hiking and playing with my two kids.

Preschool-6th Grade Co-Coordinator:
Meghan Iacino – Meghan@firstuniversalist.org

Meghan Iacino is excited to be returning to the staff at First Universalist for the third year. This year she will be one of the Pre-6th Co-Coordinators. She and her husband, James Iacino, became members in August 2015. They found a home at First Universalist and quickly got involved. Meghan volunteered teaching with the 2nd and 3rd graders and James joined the choir and BFF. Now in their fourth year as members, they are happy to do whatever they can to help make this another great year.

Meghan is a Denver native. She attended Colorado State University and graduated with a degree in Human Development and Family Studies and an Early Childhood Education teaching license. She has previous experience teaching dance, preschool, kindergarten, and second grade.

In addition to her teaching background, Meghan has been a dancer and performer since the age of 5. She has performed in Colorado musical theater productions professionally over the last 12 years, danced on two Celebrity Alaskan cruises, and continues to act in regional and national television commercials.

When not working for FFRE, Meghan enjoys traveling, photography, and spending time with her son.

She is looking forward to continual growth as a staff member and also as a member of such a wonderful congregation.

Preschool-6th Grade Co-Coordinator:

Linda Champney - linda@firstuniversalist.org

I am married to Rod Champney, and we have three daughters, three sons-in-law, six grandsons and three granddaughters who mostly don’t live close by. I am a teacher who has taught at every grade from preschool through graduate school. Almost twenty years ago, I retired from Littleton Public Schools where I worked as an English teacher and reading specialist at the elementary level, the middle level, and the high school levels. However, I decided I wanted to work with pre-service teachers and worked in several community colleges, earned my PhD, and taught at Metropolitan State University for ten years. I currently work for an online university, and I mentor doctoral candidates through their dissertations.

My religious background is varied. I was raised and married in the Episcopal Church in El Paso, Texas and then joined the Methodist Church which was close by. While there, I was director of their preschool and started a Mothers-Day-Out program before leaving my daytime jobs to teach middle school. We moved to Southern California in 1979 and after a couple of years in Irvine, California, we were transferred to Colorado where my family and I attended St. Andrews Methodist Church in Littleton. I taught Sunday School there and participated in Vacation Bible School. A few years ago, Rod and I decided we wanted to find a new church family that was focused on being the best person you can be; we joined First Universalist.

Director of Faith Formation and Religious Education:

Yvonne Wilken – Yvonne@firstuniversalist.org

Yvonne has been working in ministry in one form or another since 1999. While in art school, she felt the call to ministry and transferred to Augsburg College in Minneapolis, where she received B.A. in Youth and Family Ministry in 2003. She went on to complete her M.A. in Congregational and Missional Leadership in 2006 from Luther Seminary in St. Paul. Yvonne still considers herself an artist and loves to draw, paint, create mixed media, sew, knit, spin and in general create beautiful things. In her spare time, she can be found working on an art project, reading, walking, or spending time with family.

Yvonne was born and raised in Minnesota and lived there for most of my life. In 2007, Yvonne moved to Wisconsin to become a campus minister for the University of Wisconsin River Falls. In 2014, Yvonne moved to Colorado to be closer to family. After a brief return to Wisconsin to care
for family Yvonne was excited to return to Colorado and First Universalist Church of Denver in 2017.