

Youth Religious Education Report to the Congregation

May 6, 2018

Jamila Batchelder, Director of Religious Education (DRE)

This has been an exciting year in our religious education program!

1. Funding, Employment and Volunteers

- Funding: The YRE program was given an operating budget of \$5,750 this year. This includes categories for RE Supplies, Jr. Youth, YRUU, OWL and Leadership Training.
- DRE Employment Contract: The Director of Religious Education is now a year-round position. The current total compensation package is \$48,930 which includes salary at \$37,080 for 35 hours per week, \$2,500 for continuing education for the DRE, plus insurances and taxes.
- Nursery: We have implemented a system in our nursery of one adult nursery worker in a supervisory role (\$11/hr), and two high school nursery workers (\$10/hr). Our adult workers are Megan Hayday and Madison Bellamy. Our teen workers this year were Tricia Carver-Horner, Ben Abernathy, Leila Gassman, Naomi Garson, Maya Bell, Ellie Abernathy, and Eva Ewing. Nursery workers worked from 8:45-12:15. We also provided an aide to Ruby Batchelder-Draper, a child with special needs, to support her in the R.E. classroom. The aide worked from 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. on regular R.E. days (not intergenerational service days or Service Sunday Days). It was decided that this role should be filled by an adult as it required special training and maturity (compensated at \$11/hr). Madison Bellamy worked with Ruby in addition to her work in the nursery. All nursery workers also worked providing childcare at church events. We worked with groups to expand availability of childcare at church events to make them more accessible to parents. We held a First Aid Training at the church to get our childcare workers Red Cross certified. Church member Sarah Smith donated her time and expertise to lead the training, and five of our workers made use of this training (others got certified other ways or were already certified).
- RE Volunteers: 38 adults volunteered in our R.E. classrooms this year. Additionally, we had 4 adults serving as Service Sunday helpers, 3 volunteers for Jr. Youth Group, 4 advisors for YRUU and 2 volunteers assisting with the K-2 OWL program. A teacher training for Sunday School teachers, aides and Service Sunday helpers was conducted in August, and national background checks were run on new teachers and teachers with screenings older than 5 years. An RE appreciation luncheon will be held in June.

Communications

- Each week our teachers are notified via email information about their lesson. Families are likewise updated on R.E. activities and upcoming events via e-mail and Facebook posts in our R.E. community Facebook group. Jr. Youth is made aware of their monthly activities via e-mail was notified via e-mail and a postcard invite into the program. YRUU teens and parents receive weekly texts, e-mails and posts on their Facebook page.
- In addition, there is an RE page included in each weeks order of service and each month's church newsletter. All RE portions of the website are updated weekly as are all RE bulletin boards and the Sunday School board.

Sunday School

- Enrollment:

We have about 88 children registered in R.E. Our average Sunday morning attendance is about 36 children. Our highest Sundays were our January services (over 40 children) and Easter Service (40 children).

Visitor sheets are available at the Welcome Table and each classroom in order to learn more about our new families (name, age, contact information, allergies, etc.) as they begin attending Sunday School.

- 9 a.m. Sunday School: This was our first full year in which we offered a 9 a.m. R.E. classroom, using the Montessori-inspired Spirit Play format. Attendance averaged four children, but dipped toward the end of the year.
- Fall-Spring Curriculum: This year we used several new curriculum. YUUTs used “Crossing Paths,” the updated “Neighboring Faiths” curriculum. Thoreau used “URUU”, and curriculum exploring UU identity. Schweitzer used “World of Wonder,” a curriculum looking at our 7th principle and our connection to nature. Potter class used a curriculum that we have used before, “Chalice Children” that is meant to familiarize children with the church and our rituals and holidays, celebrate the experience of wonder and joy, and build relationships and relationship skills. The Spirit Play class used all new curriculum, focusing on stories from world religions in the fall semester, and stories from the Bible in the spring semester.
- Next Year Curriculum: We are in the process of choosing our curriculum for fall. We will be doing a Coming of Age program with 7-9 graders, which will require adding an additional R.E. class for 5-6th graders (6th graders are usually combined with 7-8th graders). This will require additional volunteer support. The 5-6th grade class may use the Twilight Zone curriculum (watching episodes of the Twilight Zone and discussing issues raised in them).
- Summer Sunday School:
Like last year, we will do a two classroom Sunday School model again this summer. Younger children (Pre-K-3rd grade) will do Spirit Play. Older children (3-8th grade) will do a series of workshops on a variety of topics.
- Service Sundays:
This year, we included in our Service Sundays not only service projects, but also workshops to help us learn how to be better community members in our church and the wider world. We also worked to make each Service Sunday connect with the theme that the church worship was focused on for the month.
The Service Sunday projects were as follows:
 - September (kinship) – Put together school packs for Festival of Sharing
 - October (difference) – Workshop on Disabilities and Differences
 - November (struggle) – Made blankets for the Project Linus.
 - December (faithfulness) - Made stockings for Care Team to give to church members
 - January (clarity) – Bake sale to raise money for ArchCity Defenderse.
 - February (flexibility) – Made weavings to support Stewardship Drive.
 - March (memory) – Workshop on Being in Community with Our Elders

April (imagination) – Canned Food Hunt for Food Bank
May (celebration) – made birthday bags for Rainbow House

Multigenerational Sunday Services

Rev. Molly and I have conducted one multigenerational service each month. We have worked to include movement, stories, and activities that keep engage people of all ages. We have gotten incredible support from our musicians in finding musical pieces that appeal to young people. We have also worked to include the teens in our church in leading these services, such as in the Solstice Service shadow play.

Intergenerational Events

We held intergenerational events throughout the year. These included monthly Pie & Board Game events and various monthly skills workshops hosted by the Green Sanctuary Team. Other special events included:

December: Simple Gifts Workshop
Complicated Gifts Workshop
Hanging of the Greens Party
January: Downing of the Greens Party
February: Valentine's Day Dance
March: Intergenerational Ancestry Potluck
April: Easter Brunch

Other R.E. Programming

- Jr. Youth Group (6th-8th):

Leaders include Lisa Fritsche, Qhyrrae Michaelieu, and Patty Daus

September – Planning and Covenant Building

October – Fort Building

November – Chopped Cooking Game

December – Complicated Gifts

January – Movie Night (Up)

February- Dance competition & music trivia

March – YRUU Game Night

April – Cooking for Loaves and Fishes

May – End-of-year party

- YRUU (9th-12th): Our high school youth group included 14 active members this year. They created their own curriculum, including educational activities (e.g, learning about citizen lobbying), discussion activities (e.g. listening to and discussing podcasts), fellowship activities (e.g. bike riding on Katy Trail), service projects (e.g, cooking for loaves and fishes), and various fundraising activities (e.g. Easter Brunch). The YRUU youth group hosted a regional youth conference for the first time ever, which was a huge success with the support of dozens of church volunteers. 70 teens and 24 teens from around Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas attended the conference. The teens also put together a very successful lay-led service on gun violence. Both of these were very intensive and gave a great opportunity for our teens to build their leadership skills. The youth group also hosted the Valentine's Day Dance and the Easter Brunch and Egg Hunt.

- OWL: This was a big year for our OWL program as we worked to bring in new teachers and expand the classes we offer. We hosted a training at our church with people coming from all over the

country to get certified to teach OWL. 25 people obtained certification, including seven from our church (one was renewing his certification). We trained both in high school/junior high OWL and elementary level OWL. We postponed our high school OWL class one year in order to regroup and plan after the training. We did offer a K-2 grade OWL class this spring that 11 families participated in, many from outside our church community. We are planning to offer a 5-6th grade OWL class this fall.

Teams:

- Religious Education Team:
Tracey Milarsky serves as chair of the RE committee. The other members are Lindsey Smith, Amie Burling, Anja Eick, Andrew Eick, Corinne Mann, and Becky Scott. This committee meets in the Centering Room at 12:30 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month. We held a RE Team training in December with UUA staffperson Nancy Combs-Morgan.
- Youth Advisory Council (YAC):
The YAC was not operating in a meaningful way, so it is currently on hiatus until its mission can be more clearly defined and there is volunteer support willing to take it on.

Plans for 2018-2019

As we move forward into the next year, we have plans to

- Expand OWL, particularly offering 4-6 grade OWL and making offering an updated high school OWL.
- Create a children's play area outside
- Continue growing the RE program throughout the year

Other

How can YOU help our RE program?!?:

- We need teachers and aides for summer R.E. and in the fall. Because our Coming-of-Age program, we will be adding an additional class this fall, so we will particularly be in need of new volunteers.
- If you are asked, be a Coming-of-Age mentor!
- Become a part of our OWL sexuality education team. This will involve receiving a three-day training, likely out of state.
- Join our team in creating a children's play area.
- Thank you all for your support of our program that relies on committed and caring volunteers! Please feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions concerning our RE program.

Sincerely,

Jamila Batchelder, DRE
dre@uuchurch.net