

Religious Education Committee Annual Report 2012-2013

The Religious Education Committee meets monthly to plan activities for children and adults, and to organize curriculum and teachers for classes held during the Sunday service.

This year marked the first of two years with an Interim Minister as we search for a new settled minister. The largest impact to Religious Education was the increased number of Multigenerational Services offered. There is a growing movement to be more intentional about including children in the life of the church. When we create a totally child-oriented culture for our youth, it is harder for them to find their place in the congregation when they "age-out" of the youth program. This was the second year that children were invited to the sanctuary every Sunday (except for a handful of vacation weeks when childcare is offered instead of regular classes) for the beginning of the service to be with their parents, sing a hymn, hear a story, participate in Joys and Concerns, or experience some other ritual to acquaint them with the "adult services". The Religious Education Committee will work more closely with the Worship Associates next year to find ways to make the multigenerational worship experience more satisfying for all ages. This year we tried to find ways to support the three initiatives put forth by the Board of Trustees which included ←the improved communication project, ↑retain youth and attract young adults, and →the all-church social justice project. To improve communication, teachers offered reflections on their classes which were printed in the Order of Service each week. Many of our service projects were focused toward the "Ending Hunger and Homelessness Project," to do as much as we could to educate the children and help them contribute to this effort in some way. The young adult focus was more of a challenge, as the numbers are few and interests and situations are widely varied.

This year's Religious Education Committee Chair, Julia Fletcher, is one of our youth. She spent her junior year in high school as a foreign exchange student in Denmark, and her senior year at home in Nashua. After growing up in our church school program, she was able to offer us a semester of teaching, and one year of committee leadership before heading off to university next September. She was also liaison to and active member of our youth group, which was ably led by Chuck Rehberg, Monica Staples, Steve Hedges and Michelle Morrison. Chuck has worked with our youth for the past 27 years and has been a valuable mentor and gifted conversation leader transforming minds with thought provoking questions. Our youth have a safe haven to process the turbulent territory of teen-hood. Lori Lerude has been helping the parents of these teens by convening a meeting for them once a month during the same time frame as the youth group.

This year the Adult Religious Education Committee has blossomed with Jerry Ross as the Chair. It is now known as the Spiritual Development Committee and you can find its Annual Report on a separate page.

Religious Education Director

Chris Parker

DRE Professional Activities

Chris attended monthly Southern New Hampshire DRE Cluster Meetings; the LREDA Fall Conference in Williamsburg, Virginia, LREDA Chapter meetings throughout the year including a workshop on time management in Portsmouth, NH. She attended a workshop for new Religious Education Chairpersons with Julia Fletcher in the fall.

Religious Education Committee Members

Julia Fletcher – Chairperson
Steve Griffis
Amy Savoie
Charles Savoie

Jen Saucier
Carol Wagner
Mary Ellen Wessels
Nona Storer - Volunteer Coordinator

Budget

RE Committee: \$ 5,200.00

Average Sunday Attendance

Fall: 61 children 22 volunteers
Spring: 54 children 20 volunteers

Graduating Seniors: Emily Annand, Kate Bedinger, Courtney Cannava, Madison Cutler, Julia Fletcher, Stephanie Pelletier, Kurt Plante, Dan Warner and Katie Woolsey

Religious Education Committee

Annual Report 2012-2013

Multigenerational Services

- **Water Service:** On the 9th of September, the senior high youth carried the banner to the front of the church as is done at the UUA's General Assembly. Members of the congregation brought samples of water from their summer experiences and were invited to share the spiritual significance of their experience during the service. We also dedicated our Church School teachers.
- **Harry Potter Play:** on Oct. 28th, a play written and directed by Rev. Olivia Holmes was presented highlighting characters from J.K. Rowlings' popular Harry Potter books
- **Thanksgiving Service:** *The Thanksgiving Coat* by Kailee & Elizabeth A. Hoardley was read with the illustrations projected on a screen for all to see. We also did an interactive activity ("Human Bingo" which was re-named "Thanksgiving Patchwork of Sharing").
- **Founding Father's Play:** a play written and directed by Rev. Olivia Holmes in honor of President's Day and highlighting early Unitarians who were important to our history was presented.
- **Stewardship Sunday with Nick Page:** All were invited to a service that capped our Pledge Drive. Nick Page led the spirited music.
- **Children's Day:** A Children's Service was revived. Each class participated. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades acted out the "Parachuting Cats in Borneo" story with the 5th grade launching pompom cats attached to coffee filter parachutes from the balcony. The Youth Choir was honored, high school seniors were bridged, teacher's were honored with a "high five" from all the church school children and gifted by the RE Committee. Following our long time tradition, geraniums were given to students and teachers.
- **Flower Service:** Congregants bring a flower from home to represent the gifts they bring to our community and leave with a different flower to represent the gifts we receive from the community.

Special Events

- **Ice Cream Social:** After class on the first day of church school, the congregation was invited to the White Wing play-yard for an R.E. Ice Cream Social. The goal was to provide a sense of community for children, parents, teachers and church members.
- **Open Houses:** The RE Committee set up displays to bring greater awareness to the UU RE offerings at the fall *Open House* and the spring *Bring-A-Friend* Sunday.
- **Winter Party/Spring Party:** During the craft parties, children from kindergarten on up attended the early part of service and then gathered together in the auditorium. Crafts and snacks were made available to the children during both parties. In addition, children were invited to participate in service projects.
- **Pizza & Games Night:** This is a night of appreciation for RE volunteers and their families. Guests brought their favorite games to play after dining on pizza and dessert.
- **Teacher Orientations:** Chris Parker meets with teachers in the fall and spring to discuss classroom regulations and provide curriculum materials. Committee members are encouraged to attend these meetings.
- **Teacher Meetings:** are held to enable teachers to share their experiences and seek additional guidance as needed. Jenn Saucier helped teachers understand the state-mandatory reporting laws in the fall and in the spring we had a lively discussion about what we remembered from our early church school experiences (or other meaningful organized activities) and what we think our youth will take away from their time here.

Service Projects

- **Coat Drive:** based on a book, *The Thanksgiving Coat* by Kailee & Elizabeth A. Hoardley, read at the Thanksgiving Service, the R.E. Committee sponsored a drive collecting about 60 coats. The coats were offered to anyone who attended our Community Dinner, the rest went to the Soup Kitchen.
- **Red Cross:** At the Winter Party, children were invited to decorate salt-dough chalices. These chalices were then sold in coffee hour which raised \$42 for the Red Cross.
- **UNICEF:** Trick-or-Treat boxes were distributed to students who collected \$37.00 for UNICEF.
- **Nashua Soup Kitchen:** At the Winter Party, the children decorated and filled about 50 bags of cookies, candy canes and candy kisses that were donated to the Soup Kitchen.

Religious Education Committee
Annual Report 2012-2013

Page 2 of 3

Service Projects (Cont.)

- **Goffstown Prison for Women:** The children decorated 21 spring-themes cards for the women at the Goffstown Prison that were distributed to them on Mother's Day, honoring the inherent worth and dignity of every person
- **Sr. High Service Projects -** Senior High donated \$134. to the Nashua Children's Home by selling gently used items donated by members of the congregation at the Winter Party.

Choir: Director: Jed Holland

- Jed invited any child who wanted to sing to join the Youth Choir. Frana Avery helped lead the Youth Choir.
- Adults and youth were welcome to join the Adult Choir.

GRADE	LIASON	CURRICULUM/TEACHERS	
		FALL	SPRING
Babies/Toddlers	Chris Parker	Crystal Edington	Klaudia Yanushkevich
Preschool	Amy Savoie	Celebrating Me and My World	
		Dawn Cutler	Madison Cutler
Kindergarten-First Grade	Jenn Saucier	Treasure Hunting	
		Peggy Cardone John McCannon	Jodie Holway John McCannon
Second-Third Grade	Charles Savoie	Faithful Journeys	
		Jamie Hinkle Kurt Steinbrueck	Kris Davidson Karen Murray Courtney Cannava (Assist)
Fourth Grade	Steve Griffis	Heart Talk for Kids	
		Kris Davidson Sally Thomas	Wayne Fletcher Charles Savoie
Fifth Grade	Julia Fletcher	Spirit of Adventure	
		Mary Ellen Wessels Julia Fletcher	Mary Ellen Wessels Mandy Eberle
		Donna LaRue Wayne Fletcher	Michelle Morrison Victoria Agnew
Sixth-Seventh Grade	Amy Savoie	Neighboring Faiths	
		Victoria Agnew Michelle Morrison Jen Morton	Lori Lerude Kim Steele
Eighth Grade	Steve Griffis	Our Whole Lives (O.W.L.)	
		Ginger Hedges	Geoff Skelton Andy Straussberg
Senior High Youth Group	Julia Fletcher	Youth Group	
		Chuck Rehberg Steve Hedges	Monica Staples Michelle Morrison

Respectfully submitted by Chris Parker, Director of Religious Education