

**Annual Report from the Interim Director of Religious Education
Community Unitarian Universalist Church
The Reverend Jennifer Innis
May 2018**

Context for the Transition in Professional Religious Education Leadership

The Six Developmental Tasks of the Congregation in the Interim Period are:

1. Coming to Terms with History
2. Evolving a Unique Religious Education Program Identity
3. Leadership Changes During the Interim Period
4. Renewing Associational Linkages
5. Commitment to Future Program Vitality
6. Continuing to Create and Offer a Strong Religious Education Program

The Five Process Tasks of the Religious Professional in Transition Ministry:

1. Joining the System
2. Analyzing the System
3. Connecting with the Denomination
4. Focusing and Assuming Responsibility
5. Exiting and Evaluating

Context for Religious Education Program at Community Unitarian Universalist Church

Religious Education Board Mission

We are a program that does religious education through our values and principles. We model those values in how we educate empower, build community, and accepting and loving of all. We are a loving, tolerant, accepting, powerful, open, and socially active community with a balance of power throughout.

Religious Education Priorities for 2017-2018:

- Address transitions in professional leadership and in the Religious Education Board
- Maintain our strong Sunday morning programming
- Make our programming for 4th through 7th grades dynamic and engaging
- Expand on lifespan programs

Thank you to the 2017-2018 Religious Education Board: Brennan Hadden, chair; Steve Dodds; Jack Dorman, youth member; Angela Hathaway; Lousinda Long, until December 2017; Danni Williams

This is how we worked to achieve these priorities and address the transition in professional religious education leadership.

Address Transitions in Professional Leadership and in the Religious Education Board

- The IDRE and the RE Board worked together to launch the start of the program year.
- The IDRE made new Backback Blessings tags and the RE Board led the Blessings section in worship on August 27.
- The RE Board welcomed two new members: Jack Dorman (youth) and Steve Dodds.
- Members of RE Board and the IDRE participated in Visioning and RE Startup weekend with Natalie Briscoe, UUA Southern Region Staff, on October 21-22
- The role of the professional staff and the role of volunteers was a frequent focus of discussion as the IDRE and the RE Board determined how much the previous DRE, Kathy Smith, was at the center of managing the program.
- The RE Board and the IDRE revised the priorities and job description for the IDRE 2018-2019 search.
- The RE Board in consultation with the Board is managing the search for a new IDRE to start on August 1.
- The Board approved the RE Board's request to temporarily expand its charter and membership to include adult programs and a dedicated RE Board member.
- Many thanks to Brennan Hadden for his vision of a strong Religious Education Board and for his efforts to create a structure in support of that vision.
- Follow through on plans for staff transition including exit interview with departing IDRE and documenting what has been learned about the role of the DRE and how to run the children and youth program.

Maintain Our Strong Sunday Morning Programming

- Completed the Jedi Academy as the 2017 summer program.
- Started and conducted the education program for Preschool through Grade 12.
- Fulfilled the curriculum theme of Seven Principles/Unitarian Universalist Identity.
- Preparing for the summer 2018 by putting together a curriculum that accounts for the early start of the next school year and a highly variable pool of volunteers, cultivates youth leadership in worship, continues the theme of Unitarian Universalist identity, and provides a range of ways for children to engage with content. The program is called A STEAMY Summer, short for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math – and Youth! In addition to the multi-age class for Preschool through Grade 8, the High School will prepare to lead worship for all ages on August 5.

Make Our Programming for 4th through 7th Grades Dynamic and Engaging

- Retained elements of Jedi Academy in Grades 4-7 to augment theme focus and kinetic activity in classes.
- Used high level of participation in OWL for Grades 4-5 as jumping off point to start a parent-led teaching team for 2018-2019. 12 children participated in the spring OWL for Grades 4-5.
- Include fidget items for children while the teachers present the lesson. Add large motor activity whenever possible.

Expand on Lifespan Programming

- Leaders and youth organized and completed three youth trips in summer of 2017. The trips were the Heritage Trip for the Coming of Age class, General Assembly in New Orleans for June 21-25, and the New Orleans service trip for June 26-July 1. The General Assembly trip included 3 youth and 3 adults. The New Orleans service trip included 7 youth and 7 adults.
- Continued to maintain the Soul Work tables in the sanctuary.
- Over 25 children, youth, and adults participated in the Dallas Pride Parade on September 17.
- IDRE and RE Board Chair participated in the reconstituted Safe Congregations Team.
- Successfully ran all expected levels of Our Whole Lives, including Adult for the first time. OWL classes included grades K-1, Grades 4-5, Grades 8-9, Senior High, and Adult. 12 volunteers led all of these classes over the course of the year. Several volunteers led multiple classes. Many thanks to Angela Hathaway for her role as OWL coordinator on the RE Board.
- Attendance in Grades 10-12 increased from an average of 8 to an average of 12 or more. The youth and the advisors create a welcoming atmosphere and have a high rate of retention of new youth and families. The advisors need to schedule at least 3 adults for every Sunday in order to remain within youth:adult ratios for safe congregation and UUA Southern Region youth policy. Senior high youth families have been very supportive of the program. They provide overnight supervision of lock-ins and most of the food needed for events and fundraisers. Youth programs include regular attendance in the start of worship, the study of world religions, social events at church and in the community, and service activities such as singing Christmas carols at a local memory care facility.
- Senior High youth coordinated with youth from Westside Unitarian Universalist Church in Fort Worth to host the North Texas Rally at Community on March 23-25.
- Thank you to the dynamic duo of Danni Williams and Mariah Dodds for their leadership of the senior high programs this year. Their care and their organization anchored the program. Their method of collaborative leadership with adults and youth made it easier to respond to the increase in participating youth, find ways to include the junior high in activities and fundraising, and provide a model for how to structure young adult and grade 4-7 programs.

Projected for 2018-2019

Address Transitions in Professional Leadership and the Religious Education Board

- Orient the new IDRE to the church and the program year.
- Continued ownership of Backpack Blessings being led by the RE Board during the first Sunday of the program year on August 12.

Maintain Strong Sunday Morning Programming

- Curriculum theme for 2018-2019 will be based on the six Sources in Unitarian Universalism

- Run OWL for Senior High again in 2018-2019 due to the large increase in youth who are new to the program in 2017-2018.
- Run Coming of Age for junior high youth.

Make Our Programming Dynamic and Engaging

- Launch restructured program for Grades 4-7

Expand on Lifespan and Family Ministry Programming

- Prepare to add Young Adult Ministry in 2019.

Interim Director of Religious Education Activities

Transitions in Professional Leadership

- I started work on August 1, 2017. My year of service as IDRE ends on July 31, 2018.
- Due to my coming on at ¼ time for the first two months of my term, I had a very limited amount of time to prepare for the start of the year. Kathy Smith did a great job with her effort to established schedules and programs for the year before she finished at Community in July 2017. As the RE Board and I learned, there is a difference between having a list of volunteers and having teachers on teams and on the schedule. The usual training and orientation for teaching teams did not happen as expected. I spent most of the year on catching up with the schedule and working with volunteers to maintain the program.

Maintaining the Religious Education program

- As reminded by Natalie Briscoe on October 22, maintaining the program is a major accomplishment during a time of significant professional staff transition such as is being experienced by Community UU.
- I provided regular communication.
- I managed the Sunday morning classes with a very small pool of volunteers. Most Sundays included 2-3 vacancies in classroom assistants for Grades K-7. I filled those gaps with last minute recruiting and shuffling of volunteers depending on programs and attendance. I usually assisted in a classroom along with checking to see that all classes were able to run as expected.
- I served as class leader for Preschool, Spirit Play Grades K-1, Spirit Play Grades 2-3, and Grades 4-7. I scheduled volunteers to teach, prepared lessons, and set up most of the supplies.
- I coordinated the Children's Chapels on the fourth Sunday of most months. The team that had been in place with Kathy Smith did not continue into this year. For most months, I led the chapel with the help of a few volunteers.
- I retained the list of children and youth in the current religious education spreadsheet. That list includes about 100 children and youth. Mariah Dodds maintains a separate spreadsheet of about 70 youth for Grades 10-12. There is some overlap between the two documents. End of year attendance runs 25-35 children and youth.

Worship

- I provide the Message for All Ages 3-4 times per month.
- I led worship on October 15 as part of second Black Lives UU White Supremacy Teach-In.
- I led all ages worship based on Chalica on November 26. I led what is known as the “No Rehearsal Pageant” on December 10. I shared leadership of all ages worship on Easter. I participated in other all ages worship including Christmas Eve and the Flower Communion on Mother’s Day.
- I was the special worship leader on April 22 as part of starting to close the annual budget drive.
- I have been promoting the development of children and youth as worship leaders in conversation with the RE Board and the Worship Team.

Fundraising

- I managed major fundraising efforts for the program year. Fundraising for most of the year was in collaboration with Danni Williams. In the last months of the program year, I focused on catching up with the arrangements and fundraising needed to get youth and adults to New Orleans for the service trip and to General Assembly in Kansas City, MO. One of the challenges was the need to raise as much as \$8000 in less than 2 months. Members of the congregation were very generous. Stephanie Dorman and I worked on various grant applications and other fundraisers. Many thanks to the Board for finding money to cover a possible gap in fundraising for these trips.
- I learned how to manage a large Rummage Sale. Kenneth Williams and Jack Dorman were particularly strong youth leaders in the work of setting up, running, and breaking down the sale.
- One of the interim tasks for 2018-2019 will be to create a plan for fundraising and assessing the status during the year, rather than rushing at the end of the year.

Nursery and Childcare

- Due to shortfalls in volunteers, I scheduled three childcare providers for nearly every Sunday. During the worship and education hour, two staff remained in the Nursery while the third person assisted in the Preschool class or in another class.
- In February Lucia Shipp resigned as Childcare Coordinator and from the childcare team. I have been handling the scheduling and the timesheets since her departure. Currently I am working with new Personnel volunteer on hiring a new Childcare Coordinator and adding a new staff member to the childcare staff.
- With help from the RE Board, I have been reviewing ways to train childcare staff in how to recognize different developmental needs in children and respond accordingly.

Participation in Community Life

- I regularly attend Coffee Hour and church events such as the Service Auction. I respond to inquiries about the church as well as the religious education program. I am a visible presence on Facebook.

Committee Meetings

- I regularly participate meetings of the Board, RE Board, Safe Congregations, staff, and Worship Team. I meet regularly with the minister.

Denominational and Continuing Education Activity

- Patrick and I continued to participate in the Bowen Family System class led by Doug Hester from September through May. I completed the online UUA interim training for religious education professionals in the fall. I participated in the online anti-racism coaching for white ministers in the fall. In November I participated in the LREDA Fall Conference and the Multicultural Renaissance Module in Denver, CO. I assisted with organizing and I attended the Courageous Faith workshop at Horizon Unitarian Universalist Church on February 23. This spring I arranged for 6 weeks of one-on-one vocational coaching.
- My family and I will attend the General Assembly of the UUA in Kansas City, MO for June 17-25.
- I will co-lead the family ministry track during RE Week at Ferry Beach in Maine for July 7-13.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Innis