

DRE Report to the Congregation, May 2017

Kathy E. Smith, Director of Religious Education, Children and Youth

*Thank you to this year's RE Board: Brennan Hadden, chair;
Angela Hathaway; Lousinda Long; Tracey Uddin; Danni Williams
Miles Dillon; Heather Joy; Seana Saxon*

These are the goals the RE Board set for 2016-2017:

- to relate all of the elements of our programming to the church's mission: nurturing spirits, working for justice, transforming lives
- to maintain our strong Sunday morning programming
- to make our programming for 4th through 7th grades dynamic and engaging
- to begin to focus on full-week family ministry

This is how we have worked to achieve those goals:

- Relating our programming to the church's mission
 - This has been an ongoing conversation at RE board meetings
 - Vision work – changing how we look at things rather than how we do things
- Strong Sunday morning programming
 - Lesson plans continue to be linked to thematic ministry
 - Eleven students completed 8th-9th OWL, 4 students in Coming of Age this year
 - 5th-6th grade OWL in Fall 2016, 8 students participating
 - Returned to seven classrooms (preK-high school) in Spring 2017
 - Sunday classes extended to noon, PreK in worship 15 minutes each week
- Teacher recruitment/retention/training
 - CUUC-specific training individually by DRE for each teaching team
 - NATUUREs day-long teacher training in August and dinner in January
 - Regular thank-you notes to teachers and volunteers
 - Recognition of teachers and volunteers in May service
- Making programming for 4th-7th dynamic and engaging
 - In Spring 2017 we ran two UU Identity programs (4th-5th and 6th-7th grades)
 - Students earned a chalice pin and/or a Scouting pin
- Begin focus on Full-Week Family Ministry
 - Social action and service to the church by all ages woven into classes/events
 - UU Identity work as part of daily life: Chalica calendars, Backpack Blessings
 - Thematic ministry tie-ins:
 - Family discussion questions in Order of Worship
 - Resources on bulletin board
 - Facebook postings on theme, resources
 - Three youth trips this summer (Boston, General Assembly, NOLA service trip) plus hosting the NTX rally means lots of opportunity to be part of church community throughout the week
 - Service trip to New Orleans continues to be an opportunity for partnership between youth and adults, with five adults and six youth anticipated this year
 - GA trip will also be partnership between youth and adults – 6 adults, 6 youth

Report from the DRE

In addition to working towards the goals of the RE Board, the DRE works to fulfill the mission of the church (Nurturing Spirits, Working for Justice, Transforming Lives). As I look back on eight years of service to this congregation, I am grateful for the work we have done together and the opportunities I have been afforded here for sabbatical, learning and growth. I'm proud of the way we have met the goals that were set when you increased this position to full-time: implement a full OWL schedule, establish a Coming of Age program, invigorate our youth programming, increase support for families and teachers, and increase opportunities for multi-generational community.

From 2010 to the present: We now offer all levels of OWL from K-1 to high school on a regular rotation. Coming of Age classes have been offered every other year with four to 12 students enrolled, including a Heritage Trip to Boston that is fully funded by fundraisers run by the youth (with support from their advisors and families). Attendance in youth programming has increased from 2-4 each week to 8-10 each week, and we have steadily added ways to participate in church: fundraising opportunities, social events, service projects, and community involvement. We have tailored our teacher trainings to our community (NATUUREs trainings, DRE meetings with each teaching team) and added Coffee & Coaching last year. We developed programs for families which have varied from year to year but have included Evensong, Spirit Play for adults, a young children's playgroup, OWL parent support groups, online support for Chalica and other events, multi-generational game nights, four parties for the community (Halloween, Yule, Minecraft, Spring Festival), and more. We increased support for our childcare staff by creating written policies, adding a staff position in 2012 (Childcare Coordinator), and offering regular trainings – we also include our childcare workers in our teacher appreciations! We increased involvement by children and youth in the life of the congregation through regular commitment to class donations to the service auction and an RE plot in the community garden, leading food drives or supply drives for Barron Elementary, and increased participation in worship (DRE presentation of message for all ages, Coming of Age worship services, rituals such as Backpack Blessings and Chalice Gifts for graduating seniors). I am grateful for the community's ongoing blessing for the work of religious education and support for the children and youth of our community.

Worship – I offer the Message for All Ages as requested, generally 3-4 Sundays a month. This year we offered six worship services for all ages (Water Communion, Yuletide, RE Holiday Service, Christmas Eve Family Service, Easter, and Flower Communion), leading the three December services during Patrick's sabbatical. Following our highly successful Spirit Play-themed holiday service, we installed four Soul Work Sanctuary stations in the sanctuary (two kinds of mandalas, candles, flowers) which have been appreciated by kinesthetic learners of all ages. I continued to prepare Supplemental Orders of Service and UU & Me Stories for UUs for multi-generational services and holidays. These are intended for all ages (not just for children) and provide an alternative way into the worship experience for kinesthetic and reflective learners. I also offered Children's Chapel for K-7 on the last Sunday of the month (no children's chapel in May or December, or over the summer);

Nursery and Childcare – I supervise our nursery staff, with the able calendaring assistance of Lucia Shipp, our childcare coordinator. We offer a welcoming and nurturing environment for our nursery, often the first point of contact for families, as well as engaging activities for older children during meetings and congregational events.

Intentional interaction between staff and children/youth – I work directly with the K-7th classes by leading most Children’s Chapels and RE Special Days. I build relationships with the youth beginning with Coming of Age and OWL by working on fundraisers with them, participating in the teaching team, listening to their credo statements and planning worship with them. I continue those relationships with the high-schoolers by participating in social justice projects and fundraisers with them. This year I also moderated the planning committee and supported the deans in creating/running the NTX rally. I will attend GA with the high-schoolers and go to Boston with the COA class.

Administration – We were fortunate this year to have several administrative volunteers: teens Spencer and Gillian Marren, Kenneth Williams, and Jack Dorman; church member Tracey Uddin every Thursday; and the RE Board’s monthly RE Board Work Days, September through April.

Participation in Community Life – I attend coffee hours and social times after services. I have counseled parishioners about family or parenting issues, talked to children and youth about faith development, welcomed new families on Sunday mornings, posted events on Facebook, and communicated extensively with church members/families/friends, in person, by email, and on the phone. While Patrick was on sabbatical, I also provided lay pastoral care, particularly following the election in November 2016.

Committee Meetings – I regularly attend meetings of the RE Board, Board of Trustees, Safe Congregations Committee, staff, Worship Team, and Community Garden, as well as congregational meetings. I meet regularly with the minister.

Larger Community – NATUURES – I regularly attend the monthly NATUURES meetings, and share in the work of planning/presenting joint Teacher Training in August and Teacher Appreciation in January. In 2016 I was instrumental in securing NTUUC-funded OWL training in DFW, which will now be offered every year.

Wider Community – I continue to participate in the Common Ground Street Choir, an inter-faith, inter-denominational singing group. This year we instituted monthly sings at UU churches around the DFW Metroplex. We have been at CUUC twice, in November and April.

Service to the Denomination – I serve as President of the SWUUC LREDA Chapter, as well as Good Officer. I was Children and Youth Program Lead Staff for SWIM (Southeast Winter Institute in Miami) from December 26 2016 through January 1, 2017.

Professional Development – I attended three denominational conferences – General Assembly in June (including LREDA Professional Day and Good Officer training), the UUMN Conference and Professional Day in July, and the LREDA National Fall Conference in October (including Professional Day and continued Good Officer training). And this spring I was recognized by NTUUC for my outstanding service.

Vacation – 28 days of vacation, 18 taken.