

Final Report of the Visioning Team

March 17, 2021

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Background

As a result of the WUS Core Staffing Analysis conducted in 2019-2020, the Visioning Team was formed, and its charge is: *“The Staffing and Operations Analysis Group (Core Group) recommends the creation of a five person Visioning Team charged with determining the goals and priorities of our programs serving young people from birth through high school and specifically the resources needed to serve ALL programs serving people in this age range in a way that is consistent with the WUS mission and priorities. In addition, this group should include a specific focus on the costs involved in meeting the priorities and where and how WUS could better manage personnel costs associated with this programming to help alleviate expected budget pressures. There will be no program/personnel changes for the 2020/2021 program year. However, the visioning team should have a goal of presenting its recommendations to the Standing Committee by the November 2020 SC meeting.”*

Executive Summary

At the request of the Standing Committee, the Visioning Team has summarized its most salient observations and action items into an executive summary. The full report follows and we encourage you to read it. The full report highlights the strengths and areas for growth in the children and youth programs. Here we emphasize some of the work to be done as we move forward.

This committee feels the church has an opportunity to make bold and creative changes that will serve our younger church members by providing collaborative, quality programming while staying within our financial means.

Interviews with six staff, nine parents and two youth did reveal trends to consider, and this committee offers the following observations and suggestions:

Based on congregational meetings, there is a deep commitment to continuing to provide a strong and robust RE program for children, not in a shared multi-generational environment, but as a separate program. If children are separate from the congregation during Sunday morning worship, WUS needs to offer quality programming for them, and cannot rely solely on RE parents and teen teachers to provide instruction. It would be beneficial for RE volunteers to come from the wider congregation and not be limited to only RE parents. JanFest is one example where the children have benefitted from the contributions of the adult congregation.

Congregation-wide volunteer support for RE is critical; The use of teen teachers has been very successful and there is support for continuing this. However, it was suggested by a Visioning Team interviewee from outside WUS that having teen teachers is not in compliance with the latest 2018 UUA [Safe Congregation](#) recommended practices for children's safety. These recommended practices state that teenagers "must be under the supervision of a non-parent/guardian adult and must never be left alone with children." Originally, teen teachers were hired as an option because WUS was unable to find enough adult volunteers and paid adult teachers to fill the roles. The RE program will need additional congregational support in the form of volunteers to teach, mentor and generally participate in various aspects of children and youth programming as well as potentially supervise teen teachers. Past RE volunteers have expressed that the use of volunteers worked well when enough volunteers were available, and volunteers felt more connected to the WUS community. For this model to be successful, we will need a mix of volunteers from the congregation as well as parent volunteers. In addition, the latest UUA Safe Congregations recommended practices should be thoroughly reviewed with a focus on the most recent guidelines regarding both the use of teenagers and adult volunteers and training for both volunteers and teens. Guidelines for supervision, screening, and training should be well understood. Going forward, WUS may wish to conduct cottage meetings to share information, offer ideas, and gather support from the congregation regarding our commitment to providing volunteers for this role.

There are inconsistencies in programming, rites of passage and milestones for middle school youth. WUS does not provide enough programming for Middle School students, with the exception of OWL. It no longer has the vibrant F8th in Action program it once had. Youth felt these events were stepping stones in their faith formation, and important events in their lives. We think WUS would benefit from a consistent, cohesive continuum of programming, with built-in rituals and traditional [UU rites of passage](#) for children and families, from [child dedications](#) and [Coming of Age](#) ceremonies, through [Bridging Ceremonies](#).

It would be beneficial to develop programming specifically for middle school students that mirrors Winchester Public Schools for grades 6-8, that fills the current gap in programming and acts as a recruitment program for WUSYG. (This idea came from current and prior staff.) We heard in cottage meetings how developmentally diverse this age group is, and care should be considered in grouping. We could consider joining with another UU church, or have the newly hired DRE co-lead programming with current youth group staff.

We recommend offering OWL every year without exception. It is an essential program; WUS has teams of trained adults to teach it. WUS could consider partnering with neighboring UU churches (i.e., Medford or Wakefield) or actively recruit in surrounding communities that do not have a UU church (Stoneham, Woburn, Burlington) to provide ample numbers to run the class each year.

It is important to recognize the programming that is working well. WUSYG continues to be recognized as a successful youth high school program. It provides valuable social

support in a non-judging environment. It instills important UU values such as social justice, inclusivity, compassion and generosity. Its members participate in life-altering service trips in which they “walk the talk” of their UU convictions. In addition, WUSYG reaches beyond the congregation and pulls in members from the larger town community.

The children’s chorale, and more recently the youth choir, continue to enjoy high participation. Singing as a group is an enriching and joyous experience that provides community and a shared love of musical expression.

We suggest creating a hiring and implementation team moving forward that can develop a multi-year plan, including but not limited to redesigning the job description, participating in the hiring of either an interim or an acting DRE who can examine and recommend curricula for grades Pre-K through 8, establish accountability systems, integrate children and youth programs, host cottage meetings, advise staff, etc. An interim would come in for a year or two and then leave; an acting DRE could come in for 1-2 years and then be eligible to apply for the position.

Adult Programming. Although not in the Visioning Team’s charge, our observation is that WUS provides ample adult programming created organically through church committees (Green Sanctuary, Social Outreach, Membership, Music, Pastoral Care, a new person helping to lead Denominational Affairs, and more) and WUS has a defunct Growth and Learning Committee. We feel this responsibility can be deleted from the DLE job description if each committee agrees to continue offering programming to the congregation. Moving forward, we can hire a **Director of Religious Education (DRE)**, in place of our departing Director of Lifespan Education, and base a salary reflective of our church size and program enrollment. This would automatically reduce the FTE needed for this position. We suggest the position go to **0.75FTE for the church program year**. The UUA lists this person as a Religious Educator in its [Capsule Job Descriptions](#). Based on the [UUA's Salary Guidelines](#) for a mid-size church in our geographic region, the median salary for .75FTE would be \$39,075(not including benefits).

Following the release of the Preliminary Report to the congregation on January 30, two congregation cottage meetings were held virtually (February 8 and February 14) with Erica Baron, UUA Consultant, as facilitator. Erica also facilitated a cottage meeting with staff on March 9. Notes from the three cottage meetings are included in the Appendices.

Full Report

Process

The Visioning Committee met faithfully every other Tuesday evening from March to October, and then weekly as we developed this report. We spent the bulk of the first several months interviewing (n = number of interviews):

- All staff who have direct responsibility for any aspect of children and youth programs (n= 6)
- The RE Committee
- YAC
- Families who semi-disengaged from RE classes (n=2)
- Former WUSYG members (n=2)
- A consultant from the UUA
- A DRE recommended by UUA consultant, and
- A previous staff member who worked with youth.

We asked staff to be open and honest with us, saying we would report out in the aggregate so that no specific staff person could be identified. Therefore, interview questions were fairly consistent so that we could look for trends and compare apples to apples. Questions were:

- What is your vision for children and youth programming at Winchester Unitarian Society?
- Specific to children’s programming, what role do you play?
- Are there “must haves” that should be continued? Discontinued?
- Are there opportunities for efficiency?
- How much supervision do you receive? Is it ample?
- Do you receive professional development? Who determines what you pursue?

In addition, we looked at a variety of UU church websites’ RE descriptions of similar size, located in the Metro Boston area (Cambridge, Reading, Melrose, First Parish, Lexington and Malden). We also spoke to staff from several of the churches. See chart in Appendix I.

This committee feels the church has an opportunity to make bold and creative changes that will serve our younger church members by providing collaborative, quality programming while staying within our financial means.

Historical Perspective and Background

It’s important to note that several changes have occurred over the years that have impacted our programs for children and youth. Under previous ministerial leadership, we staffed for growth and increased some staff FTEs. The long-term (17 years) youth director resigned. The church also experienced a difficult time recruiting parents to teach and switched to paid teachers. However, discussions with families whose children went through RE remembered enjoying their roles as classroom teachers, getting to know their children’s friends and families, and building relationships with one another and the congregation.

More changes have occurred. Our current RE teaching staff (except for the nursery staff person) are high school students. While these students are responsible and dedicated teachers who set a wonderful leadership example for our younger children, this also presents a concern. It appears we are currently out of compliance with the latest June 2018 UUA [Safe Congregations](#) recommended practices for children’s safety contained in the “UU

Guide to Effective Safety Policies and Practices.” We observed our current Child Care policy was developed prior to the updated 2018 Sage Congregation. Policies should be reviewed and updated regularly. The church has also experienced a decrease in membership and a shrinking pledge base. All these directly impact our ability to support our current costs for children and youth programming at current staffing levels.

It may be worth noting that these changes occurred over years and predate our current minister. We have an opportunity moving forward to implement significant change.

Previous Visioning Work

Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings: The Standing Committee and RE Committee co-sponsored two congregation-wide meetings in order to discuss the future of RE at WUS. A UUA consultant facilitated the discussions and led the conversation with probing questions about reasons for RE. In addition, the UUA consultant: presented trends in religious education, family church attendance, and societal changes; introduced concepts of faith formation; and encouraged WUS to try new things. Attendees, including children, expressed what they liked, what they would like, what they thought was important, and what they would like changed. Changes that came out of these meetings were the shift to have one intergenerational service per month and a move away from the “camp model” of Sunday RE classes that had been used that church year. The sessions did not discuss the cost of the RE Program. Please read Appendix II for the notes from these meetings.

2019-2020 RE Committee Work- Every year the RE Committee plans for the coming year, and in June 2019 extra time was set aside for an in-church “retreat” to gather feedback, review lessons learned from the past year and plan for 2019-2020 year. Using framework and guidance from UUA staff regarding essential elements of faith formation, the group looked at programming for the different age groups to help focus programming and make an effort to be deliberate in offerings. Please read Appendix III for notes and the “faith formation/rocks & wins” chart from this meeting. In addition, in response to a request from the Staffing and Operations Analysis Group (Core Group) asking the RE Committee for their priorities, the RE Committee worked on developing priorities for children’s programming through 8th grade. Two special meetings of committee members were held in December 2019 and January 2020. Keeping in mind the elements of faith formation, the group worked on developing a vision for each age group. Please read Appendix IV for notes from these meetings.

March 1, 2020 Congregation-Wide Session was sponsored by the Standing Committee to present the results of the Staffing and Operations Analysis Group (Core Group) Report. The purpose was to kick off the visioning process of the Visioning Team and solicit ideas for RE Programming from the congregation. It is clear that the congregation feels strongly about offering quality programming.

Observations and Suggestions

We are so grateful to staff for their candid and thoughtful remarks, and for not only sharing their experiences but also contributing ideas and strategies. It is clear that they are committed to the success of children and youth programming.

Children's and Youth Programming Strengths at WUS

A key strength of the Children and Youth's programming is the intentionality of creating faith formation opportunities for children and youth. Of particular note are:

- Children's Chorale - a small, enthusiastic group of children through 6th grade
- Youth Choir- offering age-appropriate opportunity for grades 7-12 to sing when they age out of Children's Chorale
- A robust and well-respected OWL program within the congregation and wider community
- An extremely successful WUSYG youth program within the congregation and wider community; there are few programs in town for this age group that practice "radical inclusion" and appeal to both leaders and followers
- Family worship every Sunday morning
- Intergenerational worship expanded from four times per year to one per month
- Family Potluck Theology events
- A Religious Education section published in the weekly e-newsletter, providing information about upcoming events and a brief summary of what is taught in each RE class.
- Questions provided in the Order of Service for the purpose of continuing the conversation about RE lessons at home
- Parenting support through programs, with invited guests and group discussion

Growing Edges

Interviews with staff, parents and youth did reveal trends to consider, and this committee offers the following observations and recommendations:

A central question remains- should WUS offer children's programming with an eye on growing the congregation, or focus on providing quality programming for the current family members? WUS has been actively engaged in increasing membership. Perhaps more attention should be given to *attracting and retaining* families with children and youth. In either case, in order to get families interested (and to retain current families), we need to have solid educational programs in place so prospective members and current members have **certainty in the programming**. This is especially important given other activities that compete for families' time, such as sports. Parents exploring our church have been hesitant to make a commitment to WUS because of this uncertainty.

Based on congregational meetings, there is a strong commitment to providing a strong and robust RE program for children, not in a shared multi-generational environment necessarily, but as a separate program for children. If children are separate from the congregation during Sunday morning worship, WUS needs to offer quality programming for them, and can't rely solely on RE parents and teen teachers to provide

instruction. RE volunteers can come from the congregation beyond their involvement with JanFest.

There appears to be a gap in a continuum of programming, as well as inconsistencies in programming across the age groups.

- Programming has been sporadic for the older age groups (roughly 5th grade to 8th grade) over the past few years.
- Some programs run only if there are a minimum number of children who can participate. For example, F8th in Action didn't run this year because of low enrollment. However, Children's Chorale provides an enriching experience for those who participate, even when participation is low. There is a sense that there may be too much emphasis on numbers.
- Interviews revealed there is little intentional collaboration between RE and music programming for children, as there is between worship and chorales. If programs were integrated, families would have a clearer idea of how they and their children could become involved on multiple levels at WUS.
- Low numbers are likely a result of lower overall membership, not necessarily the ineffectiveness of the programs themselves. This is a membership issue.

There are inconsistencies in programming, rites of passage and milestones for middle school youth. WUS does not provide enough programming for Middle School students, with the exception of OWL. It no longer has the vibrant F8th in Action program it once had. Youth felt these events were stepping stones in their faith formation, and important events in their lives. We think WUS would benefit from a consistent, cohesive continuum of programming, with built-in rituals and traditional [UU rites of passage](#) for children and families, from [child dedications](#) and [Coming of Age](#) ceremonies, through [Bridging Ceremonies](#).

Consider offering OWL every year without exception. It is an essential program; WUS has teams of trained adults to teach it. WUS could consider partnering with neighboring UU churches (i.e., Medford or Wakefield) or actively recruit in surrounding communities that do not have a UU church (Stoneham, Woburn, Burlington) to provide ample numbers to run the class each year.

RE Committee needs strong curriculum guidance. RE Committee members' understanding of UU is sometimes limited; many did not grow up in the UU tradition and are not familiar with its history, tenets, and practices. WUS needs staff whose experience and education are thoroughly rooted in the UU faith who can use and adapt existing curricula and develop new curricula that communicates this faith in a way that is interesting, relatable and age-appropriate (see paragraph below "Emergent Curriculum Method").

Youth programs are best served by experienced and knowledgeable staff/leaders. Neighboring Faiths, F8th in Action, and WUSYG are best served by people who have a

particular knowledge and talent for working with middle school and high school age groups.

- **Neighboring Faiths:** A background in world religions is helpful in teaching Neighboring Faiths, as is the ability to explain different faith traditions to middle schoolers and answer their potentially “messy” questions. The UUA Neighboring Faiths curriculum is written for 7th and 8th graders, while WUS offers this program to 5th and 6th graders, so modifications have been required. WUS may want to consider using a different curriculum. Parents have expressed interest in having their children learn about other religions, and the NF program has left a lasting impression on members who have gone through it, but the program as currently taught can be too “school-like.”
- **F8th in Action:** Having contacts in and knowledge of the social activism community, combined with enthusiasm and understanding of this age group can make F8th in Action very successful.
- **WUSYG:** A major reason for WUSYG’s success has been the strong and thoughtful staff. In other churches we looked at, some youth groups work only with volunteers. Permanent paid staff provide stability and inspire trust. Youth develop strong bonds with the staff that are not possible with temporary or rotating volunteers. In addition, it is important to have two staff members to maintain safe-congregation requirements. WUSYG functions as a covenant group, and in some respects like pastoral care. It is important to have staff that have experience with these concepts.

Suggest “emergent curriculum” teaching methods: Consider a new DRE who understands and knows this teaching philosophy/technique. This method could be used with UU curriculum and meet overall WUS RE programming vision and goals. Children can develop a vested interest in RE classes through things like project-based learning and student-led curriculum. While it would be helpful if we had teachers experienced in child-centered instruction, classroom teachers can be trained in this. Curriculum should resonate with children, spark their curiosity, instill a thirst to learn more, and engage families.

Intergenerational services: Some interviewees are on board with intergenerational services. However, some are resistant to these services because

- Parents find it difficult to focus on the service and enjoy self-reflection and meditation while young children are present.
- Parents are seeking UU education for their children.

Further discussion is needed on this topic: how does intergenerational services fit into children’s faith formation and how does it fit into the WUS congregation as a whole? Interviewees observed the 10:30 services are perhaps too traditional and do not attract young families with children and young adults. How comfortable is the congregation in having children in the service? More experimentation is suggested with these types of services to increase engagement with a broad range of age groups and attendees.

Establish strong programming for middle school students that mirrors Winchester Public Schools, grades 6-8, and acts as a recruitment program for WUSYG. (This idea came from current and prior staff.) We heard at the cottage meetings, this age group varies developmentally and care should be considered when forming groups. We could consider job-sharing this position with another UU church, or have the newly hired DRE co-lead the group with current youth group staff.

Record keeping and accountability are essential for successful programming. It is important to consistently track pertinent information, including but not limited to registration, attendance, lesson plans and current resources. This is important for periodic review to ensure we are providing quality programming that fits the needs of the congregation, and also to provide a repository of information that can be shared and utilized by future leaders and instructors.

Congregation-wide volunteer support for RE is critical. As previously stated, it was suggested by an interviewee outside of WUS that having teen teachers causes WUS to be out of compliance with [Safe Congregation](#) policies. Originally, teen teachers were hired as an option because WUS was unable to find enough adult volunteers and paid adult teachers to fulfill the roles. The teen teachers have been wonderful role models for our younger children and could potentially serve as co-teachers with an adult. The RE program will need additional congregational support in the form of volunteers to teach, mentor and generally participate in various aspects of children and youth programming. Past RE volunteers have expressed that the use of volunteers worked well when enough volunteers were available, and volunteers felt more connected to the WUS community. For this model to be successful, we will need volunteers from other members of the congregation in addition to parent volunteers. Going forward, WUS may wish to conduct cottage meetings to share information and offer ideas, review Safe Congregations policies and guidance, expand Safe Congregations training (for both adult volunteers and teens), and gather support from the congregation regarding our commitment to providing volunteers for this role.

Create a hiring and implementation team moving forward that can develop a multi-year plan, including but not limited to redesigning the job description, participating in the hiring of either an interim or an acting DRE who can examine and recommend curricula for grades 1 through 8, establish accountability systems, integrate children and youth programs, host cottage meetings, advise staff, etc. An interim would come in for a year or two and then leave; an acting DRE could come in for 1-2 years and then be eligible to apply for the position.

Recommendation to reduce the budget

Although not in the Visioning Committee's charge, our observation is that WUS has ample adult programming happening organically through church committees (Green Sanctuary, Social Outreach, Membership, Music, Pastoral Care, a new person helping to lead Denominational Affairs, and more) and WUS has a defunct Growth and Learning Committee. We feel this responsibility can be deleted from the DLE job description if each

committee agrees to continue offering programming to the congregation. Moving forward, we can hire a **Director of Religious Education (DRE)**, in place of our current Director of Lifespan Education, and base a salary reflective of our church size and program enrollment. This would automatically reduce the FTE needed for this position. We suggest the position go to **0.75FTE for the church program year.**

Qualities to look for in a new DRE

These are two salient points made by the UU consultant regarding the DRE:

- “Who we hire is more important than how many hours they work.”
- “Plan for sustainability even though we cannot predict the future.”

If WUS hires a person with the right background, skills and experience, they can accomplish so much. Look for someone with a broad understanding of the UU curriculum available, the ability to write and/or adapt curriculum, and the ability to evaluate curriculum for racial bias and cultural appropriation. This person would coordinate with the Social Justice Planning group to ensure children and youth programs are reflective of the church’s mission/work. In addition to skills and knowledge of UU faith and teaching techniques, the new DRE must have good rapport with parents/families and children of all ages.

We need someone to run Sunday morning programs for children and middle school youth, provide curriculum (with appropriate accommodations and modifications for children with special needs), supervise classroom teachers, keep accurate attendance records, and note children’s health/allergies. In addition, periodic evaluations of children’s programming, frequent, thoughtful feedback, and a continual quest for improvement are critical aspects of program development and growth.

Although not exhaustive, here is a list of qualities that we recommend for consideration:

- Empathic
- Able to form strong connections with children and youth
- Kid-centered and able to take cues from children
- Connects with kids and able to create safe spaces for them to be silly
- Able to actively solicit and accept feedback
- Willing to try new things (and not be afraid of failure). As a congregation, WUS tends to be very traditional, especially with respect to worship services. A candidate should be willing to take risks to broaden WUS horizons, and “stir things up.”
- Have a big picture, vision-oriented, creative way of thinking
- Have a sense of humor as well as a sense of responsibility
- Able to help the congregation implement its vision of Religious Education programming, and work with and listen to the Religious Education Committee in order to help focus and optimize the committee’s energy and enthusiasm
- Able to preserve current programming and build upon it. Previous visioning work done by WUS, both congregation-wide and by the RE Committee, has affirmed WUS’s intention to provide an educational program for children. How does WUS provide educational opportunities for everybody across all ages? How do we equally serve across the ages?

- Willing to ensure transparency, communicate well, and engage with parents regarding what the kids are doing during classes

Additional suggestions regarding DRE position

We suggest that the DRE job description be a “living, evolving” document, one that is revisited often (every few years or as needed) to be sure it still serves the congregation and reflects the current duties of the job title. The job description would reflect the church’s mission and vision, and stress its commitment to diversity, racial equity and inclusion.

In addition, the job description might articulate the percentage of time the DRE spends on the various aspects of their job, including worship, teaching, professional development, administration, and parent/community engagement. WUS may want to provide incentives for program/membership growth.

The DRE would collaborate with the RE Committee and then implement programming. It would be helpful if the job description were as specific as possible, referred to during supervision and evaluation, and be updated as needed.

See sample DRE job description in Appendix V.

Other observations and recommendations outside of our charge:

- WUS would benefit from a program that reaches out to WUSYG alums and young adults in the church. There is a definite gap between programming for children/youth and adults. Young adults tend to prefer to go to “Sanctuary” in the Boston area, which targets this age group.
- Consider raising funds for youth programs, such as asking parents who are not church members to make a donation to the church if their child is enrolled in WUSYG and/or OWL.
- Family Worship: Although Family Worship is not part of the RE Program, it is a big draw for RE families and acts like a feeder into the RE Program. It is often what prospective families first experience at WUS and can leave a lasting impression. With the hiring of a new DRE, it is important to look at who is responsible for Family Worship, as it can create a time crunch on Sunday mornings for both the DRE and the Minister. A review of making the Chapel accessible or changing the location of FW is warranted, as the Chapel is physically inaccessible to the mobility challenged and very far from the Sanctuary, an especially alienating experience for families attending our church for the first time.
- “Family Ministry” - Who puts the pieces together and makes sure it happens? It’s just not what happens on Sunday morning. Can it be integrated instead of siloed?
- The Committee is named Religious Education. Does that need an update along with an examination of the charge of the Committee? It would be helpful to clarify the roles of the DRE and the RE Committee.

Suggested goals

Short term:

- Place initial focus on building a strong, vibrant RE program for grades Pre-K through 8.
- Hire interim/acting DRE at 32 hrs./week, 9 months/yr. (length of church year) charged with shaping the children and youth programs we aspire to have.
- Coordinate with the Social Justice Planning group when creating job descriptions, religious education goals
- Establish Middle School programming.
- If virtual programming extends into next year, it would be helpful to look at job descriptions in general and evaluate FTEs to ensure efficient and relevant use of time.
- Building upon the previous visioning work (in addition to this report, please see Appendices II-IV), continue to develop and refine a vision for children and youth programs. How do we foster faith formation? Provide for opportunities around social justice/social action/advocate, environmental justice, etc.?
- Consider offering OWL to younger children. (The UUA offers OWL curriculum for most age groups, from Kindergarten through adulthood.)
- Consider conducting time studies for all children and youth program staff to examine distribution of time, including time spent with children and youth, administrative tasks, curriculum development and lesson planning.

Longer-term:

- As the program grows and meets benchmarks, we can discuss broadening the responsibilities to include more involvement in worship, collaborating with other committees, and increasing FTEs.
- Involve the congregation in discussions about family engagement, perhaps establishing a “mother’s place” in sanctuary for nursing mothers, and creating a space for families with young children to play quietly.

Closing

The Visioning Committee thanks the Standing Committee for the opportunity to serve the church in this way. We are committed to the children, youth and families at Winchester Unitarian Society, and to the success of religious education. Several of us would be willing to see these recommendations and improvements come to fruition.

Appendices:

Appendix I: Metro Boston Area Similar Size UU Church RE Comparison Chart

Appendix II: Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings Notes

Appendix III: June 2019 RE Committee Retreat- Notes and Faith Formation/ Rocks & Wins Chart

Appendix IV: December 2019 & January 2020 RE Committee Members Priorities

Appendix V: Sample Job Description

Appendix VI: Notes from Cottage Meetings 02-08-21, 02-14-21, and 03-09-21

Appendix I

Metro Boston Area Similar Size UU Church RE Comparison Chart

Church	Membership Numbers; RE Enrollment	RE Staff	Curricula by age groups	Parent Support Programs	RE Committee Role	How are they attracting and retaining families?
Malden	100; 47	Director of Religious Education Religious Education	K-3 grade - Spirit Play (based on Montessori platform) 4-6 grade - Helping Hands (incorporates Owl Whole Lives) 13-14 yrs Middle School Youth Group (once a month)	not apparent from website	not apparent from website	Word of Mouth Social Justice Sundays
Cambridge	171;79	one Director of Religious Education Ministry and Programs; one Youth Coordinator and volunteer leaders	Soul Matters for kids, youth and adults; \$15 to subscribe to kits; monthly Kids Circle/virtual meeting with volunteer leaders. Teens meet weekly with Youth Coord and once a month do Soul Matters.			
First Parish, Lexington	236; 93	one Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry; one Youth Coordinator; trained teacher; nursery caregiver; volunteers for nursery AND children's programs (with trained teacher)	preK-2nd Grade depart the service after the Time For All Ages for the Sunday School Class with trained teacher for Spirit Play; 3rd- 8th Grade depart the service after the prayer and second hymn to go to Chapel with the Director of Religious Education and Family Ministry for sharing and engaging with the theme or topic of the service that day; 6th-8th Grades Junior Youth Group with Youth Coordinator; 8th Grade OWL ; 9th & 10th Grades (alt yrs.) Coming of Age; High School Senior High Youth Group with Youth Coordinator; K-8th Children's Choir	not apparent from website	not apparent from website	not sure, but OWL is open to community
Reading	254; 83	Full-time DRE, 50-60 adult (and teen) volunteers	K thru 6 - Spirit Play. In addition, 10 weeks of OWL midway through church year. Grades 7 and 8 - OWL. Grades 9 and 10 - Coming of Age. Grades 11 and 12 - senior youth group.		9-person committee	Word of mouth. OWL programs in both elementary and middle

						school attract many families
Melrose	142; 55	1 DRE	PreK-1st Spirit Play, 2-5 Soul Matters, 6-8 exploring life issues, World Religions, Unitarian Universalism, Social Justice topics, and exploring their own beliefs. 7-9 Owl every other year. 9-12 Coming of Age			
Winchester Unitarian Society	244; 55	1 Director of Lifespan Religious Education; 1 Youth Religious Educator; 1 Youth Assistant	PreK-Grade 1 World of Wonder; 2nd-4th grade Moral Tales; 5th-6th "Faith Finders"/ Neighboring Faiths; 7th Grade OWL; 8th Grad "F8th in Action; 9th-12th grade WUSYG			

Appendix II

Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings Notes

June 3rd, 2018

RE and Standing Committee organized-conversation about RE future at WUS

Betsy Bowles introduced Karen Bellavance Grace from the UUA New England Region Staff Opening Words and Chalice Lighting: Turning to One Another Margaret Bowens Wheatley (Adapted)

Ask “what is possible,” not what is wrong. These are challenging conversations as the stakes feel very high. Karen assures us that “all will be well;” we are just in the process of becoming.

KIDS COME FORWARD (11)

What happens here on Sunday morning?

- We come in and sit down, listen to a story, go upstairs and do art and then come back down and have “yummy snacks”
- We sit in the booths and then we usually come down and listen to a story. Then we dash upstairs to the classroom. Then we sit in a circle and tell stuff about ourselves. Then we go to different classrooms by age. Then we all come back together to see our parents.

Why do your parents bring you here?

- To learn about stuff
- So we are not left at home
- To meet new kids
- So we are not left with dad doing his boring work

But we can meet new kids at Burger King or the Y. Why here?

What is the best thing you have ever done in Sunday school?

- Cooking
- Jan Fest (3)
- Painting
- Play in the kitchen more
- Making chalices
- Drawing
- Acting
- Going outside

What else should Karen know?

- Don't talk to grown ups
- Less arts and crafts and going outside/more cooking and reading
- More going outside (2)
- Jan Fest for multiple months

Appendix II Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings Notes (cont.)

Karen observes – as the grown ups know, people want different things from church
[children leave for the parlor]

Karen: Have you ever told your kids why you bring them to WUS?

Marsha D – explain in terms of why children are not doing 1st Communion; “we are learning to be good people”

Ryan L – for community, “to learn to be better people”

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

How do we include everyone in these two conversations?

What is the overall process?

How do we teach our children UU roots and religions of the world? How do I give my children “UU stories?” Unsure if the current program achieves this goal.

Are we asking what current families want or what families outside the church want? Culturally, faith communities are not a priority to many families but many families are seeking what happens here (eg: service opportunities)

Karen: cultural context

What has changed since you were a kid?

More UU congregations, stores open on Sunday, church scandals, computer/internet/social media, smart phones, 2 parents working, soccer practice, demands on families, “sandwich generation,” families becoming more nuclear (faith not being handed down generationally.)

With many parents not raised UU, parents as religious educators have a challenge as they themselves are not steeped in the tradition.

Changing models of American families, Title IX (greater demand on community fields), religious diversity (different sabbath days,) kids overscheduled in pursuit of a full “resume” to get into college, shortening attention spans, internet as a source of information we once got from faith communities, increase in diagnoses of spectrum disorders/AD(H)D, rise of the “nones” (those who do not identify with a faith tradition.) While UUism would be a good fit with the “spiritual but not religious,” only 10% are actively looking for a faith community.

Boomers are retiring and moving, creating a congregational leadership vacuum (Gen X is much smaller in numbers than Boomers.)

New England is the least religious region in the country.

Appendix II Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings Notes (cont.)

Phyllis Tickle: Every 500 years there is a seismic shift in organized religion. Last time was Protestant Reformation. 1517 – we are due!

Karen BG: “Every faithful experiment we do will shape religion for the next 100 years”

Karen C: This is helpful. Are we doing too many things and not focusing on what is needed for this time?

Fritzie N: RE recruiting volunteers and leaders - Should we go with where the energy is and not what the structure demands of us?

John L: Wish to claim and reclaim our religious symbols (power of the symbolism of the cross)

Karen BG: What she has heard - Attendance is down, hard to find teachers, difficulty of offering a linear curriculum with erratic attendance. How can we be with families when they can't be with us?

Why do we have an RE program? What kind of impact are we hoping to have?
(Turn to a neighbor first)

Answered before the group

John R: Reinforcement of the values we were trying to teach at home. Part of this was the curriculum but the community was the primary source of learning and ethical development. “I want children to carry on the values you all have.”

Ryan L: Parents have their own needs (eg: community) and need someone to care for their children while they meet their needs + moral development of children

Victoria I: First worship service was the youth service. Wants her children to develop a moral compass through the congregation as a counter-balance to influence of outer culture/influence of technology. Also looking for intergenerational relationships for her children.

John L: We get to rediscover who we are through passing on stories to children.

Judy M: RE is not just for the little kids but for the “come in” parents to learn about UUism

Kathy R: Want us to help kids grapple with the big questions. UUA curricula – “Why do bad things happen?” How do we convey that kind of information in a setting they will receive it?

Mary M: Wanted education that wasn't judgmental (former Catholic) and supported her in making choices. Children got a community of mentors – whole church, whole family experience. Former RE teacher and was a paid RE teacher.

Appendix II Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings Notes (cont.)

Matthew B: Also wanted a moral compass and a way to balance the “challenge of affluence” in communities like ours. Saw what older kids got out of F8th in Action and WUSYG. Never too young to learn about the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

Claire M: We all benefit from a sense of community – children and adults

Becky M: Most important thing is not what is happening in RE but in the broader community. (Deb Walsh caring for daughters allows B and D to sing in the choir. Wouldn't be here without her.)

Karen C: Here for what can't be found in other places, not just values but information (eg: OWL.)

Erin G: RE as a supplement to public school education (eg: social justice.)

Karen BG: Would be good for us to come to shared understanding (in fewer words) of what we want in an RE program. Her definition: “sharing the love and grace of UUism with each other and the world.”

Faith formation is the fundamental task of faith communities. RE is a tangible expression.

4 C's

- Curriculum or Content (eg: chalice, Clara Barton, OWL)
- Covenant
- Context and Call
- Community identity – what does it mean to be part of this community? (5 non-family adults to care about children needed to make them grow well.)

What are things we do that are outside the classroom?

- Service trips/cooking/can hunt
- Coffee hour
- Covenant amongst themselves
- Potlucks/circle dinners
- BLM banner discussions to model living in covenant

Karen BG: Few things of what we want from RE are curriculum-based

Steve B: How do teach our kids to live in this world? (unconditional love)

Matthew B: Maybe we shouldn't focus on “fixing the problem” but revisit our objectives with fresh eyes. Need to observe and appreciate how children form community among each other.

Sophia S: It is up to us to articulate our values to welcome and support new families coming here.

Appendix II Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings Notes (cont.)

Victoria I: Reluctant to invite friends with children until our RE program becomes more predictable and stronger.

John L: Want us to better know our neighbors towards determining what ministry to offer

Naomi M: Primary lesson is inherent worth and dignity

Karen BG: Is the objective to teach lessons of the world religions? To create Unitarian Universalists? WUS's questions to answer.

Gil Rendle – "Doing the Math of Mission"

- Maintenance (Keeping things going as usual)
- Preferential (How do we satisfy those who are already here? Or another demographic?)
- Missional (What is our purpose?)

Wednesday conversation

- Recap of today
- Review of models of what other congregations are doing

Happy to return in the Fall for a start up conversation

Betsy B: Homework assignment so we can prepare for Wednesday?

- Think about the program now. Is there an element we can't do without?
- Think about how you would be willing to be different. What would you be willing to do differently?

John L: Just being different is getting to what is possible

Karen C: The changes in the program happened really fast so we are processing that change right now.

Karen BG: Every group has a range of adaptability with change -

Innovators

Early adopters

Mid adopters

Late adopters

Laggards

Once first two groups are on board, it will happen

Thanks, all!

Addendum

Email from DLRE Rebecca Kelley Morgan, Monday, June 4th: "I wanted to ask you (Heather) to include in the notes the the follow up I had with Milo since he had more to add from the children's conversation - and I paraphrase, "breakout groups by age and interest - outdoor

Appendix II Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings Notes (cont.)

kids of the same age go outside, indoor types stay inside." Although Milo did not suggest this, I wonder if he and our other avid readers would be interested in a parent child book group."

On Tue, Jun 5, 2018 at 2:29 PM, Kathy Doherty wrote:

Hi,

I thought I would toss in a few thoughts that occurred to me after reading this.

Although I am on the road and no longer there, I hold a piece of the church with me so I wanted to tell you what popped into my head while reading the conversation.

First I don't have kids, but I remember it wasn't what I learned or didn't learn as a kid going to (for me CCD) RE it was basically ritual that I craved and yearned for, even though I didn't know it at the time.

Robert Fulham wrote a book about such things in "Beginning to End." In it he teaches us "how to address our personal transformations, large and small, with dignity, love, and acceptance. Whether they are public rituals, anything from weddings to sales meetings; private rituals, such as the saying of grace at a family dinner; or secret passages, such as one's personal greeting of the day, these habits and routines are sacred, as they bring structure and meaning to daily life, enriching who we are both individually and collectively." "Structure gives us a sense of security," Fulghum writes. "And that sense of security is the ground of meaning."

Hope this helps!

Kathy D

June 6, 2018

After being introduced by Betsy B, Karen BG went over the format of the evening – a recap of Sunday and then discussion of some models other congregations have tried when facing these challenges.

Those who weren't here on Sunday, what brought you here?

- Marilyn M – on Membership, wants to ensure we attract and serve young families
- Jill P – RE teacher, wanted to be present to the community
- Sioux B – OWL teacher, was an RE teacher in the past

Why does WUS have an RE program?

- Phil C – offer opportunities to children to learn in a progressive religious context; expose children to different faiths; sexuality ed; importance of service + having children creates a positive, intergenerational community
- Sioux B – safe space where children can connect with adults outside of family and school
- Marilyn M – good foundation
- Claire M – a chance to get to know other caring adults

Appendix II Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings Notes (cont.)

Rate of turnover in churches is high. Important to regularly ask of all ministries “Is this doing what we want it to be doing?”

Each year, social pressure to be part of a faith community decreases.

Now, Sunday school is more physical and interactive but otherwise very much like the traditional model

Where do we go from here? What is “the next big thing?” – no easy, clear solution

Separating kids from worship a relatively new practice

For all congregations, next step is -

1. Understanding our “why” we offer RE
2. Creating a program based on who we are and our context

Faith Formation is not necessarily the same as Religious Education
Church is one of the few places where 5 generations are together in one space

“The way we do faith formation is evolving” as compared to the past.
Change is hard, many struggle with change

There are things WUS can try...

KBG: “Your purpose is to bring the love and grace of our faith to your people, your community and our world.”

Most congregations don’t make changes...but folks are leaning in some consistent ways:

Full Week Faith – could be a union of missional ministry, faith formation, modern technology (eg: Braver/Wiser – every Wed a reflection is sent, written by a UU + concluding prayer or WUS’s Thoughtful Thursday)

- 12 sample activity cards for congregational life and/or families, activities for each role identified
- “Blessing of the Backpacks”

Whole Congregation Worship – KBG knows we don’t want to consider for every Sunday

- Kristine K: had suggested when she was on the RE committee that we involve children in worship more often
- Ryan L: Parents are concerned that worship in the past was such that caregivers had to tend to children in the service. Not good for parents or children.
- Doesn’t mean that anything needs to be “dumbed down.” Puppets not required.
- Jill P: Has been working with Rebecca to make changes. Engaging our teens has been helpful in terms of having consistent teachers and fostering intergenerational connections. Could have kids sit with the teens, have kids return to worship.

Appendix II Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings Notes (cont.)

Intergenerational exercise – Homemade Valentine cards to be given to someone you don't know. Recruit through the youth group, high school? Like to have parents pick up kids to learn more about the daily lesson.

- Phil C: Possibility of intergenerational connections between “grandparents” and children in congregation
- KBG: Congregations can set aside a “quiet zone” for those who need to hear, could have a space set aside in the corner of the sanctuary for kids to play, pick up toys
- Becky M: “I miss my kids on Sunday morning” when we segregate by age.
- Tyson K: Reserved worship culture in the congregation
- John K: Has heard feedback that parents don't want whole congregation worship. Hearing here that parents might be open. Would like to hear more about what would work.
 - Erin G: Some sermons would have to be modified (HJ: Congregations with whole congregation worship sometimes have adult-only conversations after worship re: difficult subjects with childcare in another room.)
 - Kristine K: Has thought that kids should be present for Music Sunday
 - Patty S: Is it possible to give kids a choice? (Jill P: We always give kids a choice to return to the sanctuary. Age-segregated groups become complicated when siblings are present.)
- Jill P: With more kids, could bring back some curricula (Bibleodeon) Hard to have abstract conversations with older kids with little kids present...Important to avoid an “either/or” approach to RE program/whole congregation worship

Second Hour RE

- Everyone goes to worship together then does faith formation together (eg: reflection on the sermon in small groups)
- Eg: 4th Sunday of the month “service instead of service” – intergenerational service projects in lieu of traditional worship service.

Faithfully Leverage Technology

- UU practice of Lent (40 words, 1/day. People reflect on word, take photos and upload, review posts at the end of the day.)
 - Tyson K: On building committee, wants to record the worship service. Does it make more sense to coach community in recording and sharing what happens here individually?
- Slideshow of photos from congregational life scrolled before worship every Sunday in small Maine congregation.
- FB Listing Events
- Spotify song lists related to monthly themes
- Collaborate with other congregations (eg: UU parents' group, populating OWL classes)

“Ask what's possible, not what's wrong. Keep asking”

Appendix II Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings Notes (cont.)

Claire M: What about midweek gatherings/events? KBG examples - homework help with the teens; family game nights)

Marilyn M: Catholic churches in town have, in total, 1800 kids in RE classes. What is going on? (Community discussion – cultural pressure to raise kids in the faith.)

KBG: How congregations grow – biology, relocating geographically, evangelism

Jill P: Want to bring Neighboring Faiths back. For this to happen, need to clarify goals for each age group. Separate 5th or 6th graders out and then focus on Neighboring Faiths.

John K: Why couldn't we do Neighboring Faiths with 2 kids? Community response – conflicting schedules

Tyson K: Organization and communication needs to increase in order for programs to be successful; decision needs to be made about what central channel will be used for communication.

KBG: Staff now need to communicate through more formats, taking more time, is more complex

Erin G: We need to have closer connection between DLRE, parents, teacher(s) in terms of planning programming

Gil Rendle – wary of surveys. “Once you have asked me my opinion, I have the expectation you will act on it.”

Phil C: OWL class expectations are an example of accountability to a program. Would such a covenant work with other programs? KBG: This works with OWL because the content can't be found anywhere else.

Ryan L: Some parents in the congregation won't force kids to come to church so eventually we need to market to the kids, which is harder

John K: We don't need to make the program super fun and exciting to interest kids

Jill P: Sees how tired and burnt out kids are. Sometimes thinks kids SHOULD be at home, relaxing. But also sees how class can be a space where kids share emotionally difficult things

What is essential?

- Kristine K: OWL
- Phil C: First Reflection
- Claire M: Youth/child chalice pairings; adults and children connecting about important issues
- Erin G: Children's Chorale

Appendix II Spring of 2018 Congregation-Wide Meetings Notes (cont.)

- John K: Cultivating importance of religious community and spirituality
- Betsy B: Kids knowing the Seven Principles
- Ryan L: Learning about different faiths (N Faiths one example)

How are we willing to be different?

- Phil C: Teaching the Bible as historical and cultural docume
- Erin G: Willing to receive resources to teach lessons at home
- John K: Use modular curriculum each Sunday (KBG: RE resources in UU World magazine; Faith Rocket another resource)
- Kristine K: Once a month, parents join kids in class
- Heather J: Corner of sanctuary for children to play, start 1x/month
- Judy M: Build opportunities between Boomers and kids (like Jan Fest)

Jill P: Important to assess commitment by parents going into plan; need more communication with parents, find new ways

Appendix III

June 2019 RE Committee Retreat- Notes and Faith Formation/Rocks & Wins Chart

Religious Education Leader Retreat

June 26, 2019

FEEDBACK What worked well:

- Curriculum provided a good framework
- Crafts are good – “they love drawing”, story first then craft
- Teen aides did a great job; young children love to connect with teens
- World of Wonder: Small class size was an asset (2-3 worked well)
- OWL: solid curriculum, mix of personalities, good use of technology, curriculum offered “some good options”
- “I love family worship, potluck theology”
- Love talking to young people of other ages
- Jan Fest – kids really enjoy it
- Figured out our rhythm in terms of who did what – worked for families

Intergen services – uplifting. Specific feedback: helpful to have opportunities to move around. “My children did not have a complete meltdown.” Eg: heart of hearts ritual. Kids perhaps registering more than we know. Sometimes kids just want to stay with parents during worship.

- Chalice lighting partnerships
- Kids being part of the service (eg: making memorial wreath)
- Sophia, “more Sophia”
- Pageant
- Not spread too thin (time, people, resources)
- Positive focus on transgender issues – “it makes a difference”
- Neighboring Faiths field trips

Challenges:

- World of Wonder: Stories poorly written for kids, confusing; curriculum is dense so we have to take some activities out with the time we have
- Perhaps better suited for older kids; curriculum for older kids might have worked with younger kids
- Would have benefitted from visuals
- Visitors to class – sometimes didn’t work well (content better for older kids)

- Neighboring Faiths: developed for 7th and 8th graders, book fairly “useless”
- Needs to have more parental involvement – getting the kids there
- “Felt too much like school” – kids wanting to separate at that age, public schools already teaching about different faiths
- Difficult to have 5th and 6th graders together

Appendix III June 2019 RE Committee Retreat- Notes and Faith Formation/Rocks & Wins Chart (cont.)

Perhaps structure it more like F8th in Action – partner with other faith communities in doing a service project with age peers (Temple Shir Tikvah has newcomer events)

[There are other curricula for 5th and 6th graders plus Soul Matters thematic curricula]

OWL: difficult having sibling sets sometimes (depends on their relationship)

Order of material a challenge with where the breaks fell

Group dynamics with this particular class were a challenge

Do the kids ever have a chance to present to adults? We should consider it...

Family Worship worship associates with older kids?

Wish to plan Potluck Theologies in advance at the beginning of the year (eg: 3rd Sunday of the month)

Wish a closer connection with WUSYG as their plans sometimes impact RE plans

Should Youth Sunday be an intergen service?

After worship events – could we make them more intergenerational?

Ask the kids – what do you know about...

Hard to overcome the past of difficult intergenerational services

Missed organic opportunities (eg: adults joining “the no shoes club”)

VISION/MISSION

Three “takeaways” from “Embracing Family Ministry” material:

- Constant look at what is possible/awareness that people are more into service than faith/all is well
- Community aspect (eg: parent support group)/Parent education/Intergen worship – wary of having kids present all the time, worried about making kids afraid. Need to think about what the kids are hearing
- Segregating people by age is problematic/Parents as primary religious educators; programs to support parents in their own mission/Health of children = health of community. We have been doing family ministry for awhile
- Multicultural understanding of community; “the beloved community” at the center in lieu of the Seven Principles/Support for parents; “Parents night out” as a ministry/Helpfulness of “rocks” and “wins” frame
- Population decline impacts programs/Doing things outside of Sunday morning – “It’s going to keep dying if we keep it in a little box.”/Excited about support for parents (eg: “Parents night out”)
- Where is all this heading? We are doing more than we realize. Gaps: parent supports and resources. Finds value in “the four C’s” – Content, Community, Covenant, Context

Appendix III June 2019 RE Committee Retreat- Notes and Faith Formation/Rocks & Wins Chart (cont.)

FUTURE PLANNING/NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAM

(See grid of "rocks" and "wins" of our programs)

What changes do we want to make? Need to get parents on-board (eg: upstander training)

Wish to move away from Neighboring Faiths...Could we make it more like F8th in Action? There is an organization that brings middle-schoolers together. Should we consider the kids in the class in choosing curriculum?

Possibilities: Compass Points plus (service, reflection. Eg: The Mother's Day March) Could we include advocacy? Leadership development? (Eg: Could the kids make a proposal to the building committee about redecorating the path to the chapel?; researching leaders who reflect UU values)

Not sure how to address World of Wonder...add more guest leaders? Emphasis on going outside or at least asking kids about what they notice. Try it again with different coaching...

Appendix III June 2019 RE Committee Retreat- Notes and Faith Formation/Rocks & Wins Chart (cont.)

Faith Formation/Rocks & Wins Chart

definitions: Rocks = Foundational themes of what groups need to know in a broad sense; Wins = specific goals (Exposures & Experiences)						
2019-2020 Essential Elements of UU Faith Formation	PARENTAL SUPPORT EDUCATION RESOURCES	Rocks	Wins	INFANT-TODDLERS	Rocks	Wins
CURRICULUM/CONTENT Transmit faith's traditions, symbols, theology, history, heroes, values, and practices	10:30 Service, Becoming Belonging, Family Worship, parent conversations, library			Family Worship, library, contribute worship service		I
COMMUNITY Who are we as: UUs, as congregation, theologically, in a multi-generational community? Activities and opportunities to build connections across a spectrum of diversities-theological and otherwise	potluck theology, coffee hour			Ms. Juanita		
COVENANT "Golden Rule" without disengagement How to bring best self to faith community and invites us to practice forgiveness						
CONTEXT Where are we and who are our neighbors? Understand dominant culture in relation to congregation's theology & identity. Activities that respond to real needs and carry the spiritual work in the community including interfaith partners, service agencies. Service opportunities?	educate parents, write-up of ways kids can contribute, conversations					mitten tree
2019-2020 Essential Elements of UU Faith Formation	PK-1st GRADE	Rocks	Wins	2nd-4th GRADE	Rocks	Wins
CURRICULUM/CONTENT Transmit faith's traditions, symbols, theology, history, heroes, values, and practices	Family Worship, Intergenerational Services, Potluck Theology, contribute worship service	World of Wonder, 7 principles		Family Worship, Intergenerational Services, Potluck Theology, Contribute	Moral Tales, 7 principles, involved in & contribute to service	

Appendix III June 2019 RE Committee Retreat- Notes and Faith Formation/Rocks & Wins Chart (cont.)

				Worship Service		
COMMUNITY Who are we as: UUs, as congregation, theologically, in a multi-generational community? Activities and opportunities to build connections across a spectrum of diversities-theological and otherwise		Children feel they belong WUS; recognized & greeted by greeters				
COVENANT "Golden Rule" without disengagement How to bring best self to faith community and invites us to practice forgiveness						
CONTEXT Where are we and who are our neighbors? Understand dominant culture in relation to congregation's theology & identity. Activities that respond to real needs and carry the spiritual work in the community including interfaith partners, service agencies. Service opportunities?			mitten tree			mitten tree
2019-2020 Essential Elements of UU Faith Formation	5th-6th GRADE	Rocks	Wins	7th GRADE	Rocks	Wins
CURRICULUM/CONTENT Transmit faith's traditions, symbols, theology, history, heroes, values, and practices		7 principles; Involved in & contribute to service			7 principles; involved in & contribute to service	
COMMUNITY Who are we as: UUs, as congregation, theologically, in a multi-generational community? Activities and opportunities to build connections across a spectrum of diversities-theological and otherwise			mitten tree, herb bunches, soup making, dog treats, cookie making			meal, connect families, parent conversations while here
COVENANT "Golden Rule" without disengagement How to bring best self to faith						

Appendix III June 2019 RE Committee Retreat- Notes and Faith Formation/Rocks & Wins Chart (cont.)

community and invites us to practice forgiveness						
CONTEXT Where are we and who are our neighbors? Understand dominant culture in relation to congregation's theology & identity. Activities that respond to real needs and carry the spiritual work in the community including interfaith partners, service agencies. Service opportunities?			mitten tree			
2019-2020 Essential Elements of UU Faith Formation	8th GRADE	Rocks	Wins			
CURRICULUM/CONTENT Transmit faith's traditions, symbols, theology, history, heroes, values, and practices		7 principles; involved in & contribute to service				
COMMUNITY Who are we as: UUs, as congregation, theologically, in a multi-generational community? Activities and opportunities to build connections across a spectrum of diversities-theological and otherwise			meal, connect families, parent conversations while here			
COVENANT "Golden Rule" without disengagement How to bring best self to faith community and invites us to practice forgiveness						
CONTEXT Where are we and who are our neighbors? Understand dominant culture in relation to congregation's theology & identity. Activities that respond to real needs and carry the spiritual work in the community including interfaith partners, service agencies. Service opportunities?		team be engaged person in world	discover personal values			

Appendix IV

December 2019 & January 2020 RE Committee Members Priorities

WUS Religious Education Committee Priorities 2020

History of this document

In November 2019, The Religious Education Committee was asked by the Staffing Analysis Group to come up with RE priorities. This document was created with the minutes from two meetings: December 11, 2019 and January 20, 2020 “priority setting” meetings where Lucille Cannava, Karen Caputo, Erin Graham, Ryan Levering, and Naomi Magnoni were present. Following is what was discussed and decided by the RE Committee.

What

Mission: To Provide RE Programs: To offer essential elements of UU Faith Formation for age groups ranging from infant to 8th grade described in the “Essential Elements of UU Faith Formation” table would be used to organize the process of developing priorities. This table was made during the RE planning June 2019. **The goal being for each age group to have rocks and wins within the key elements listed below throughout the programming outside of worship, giving younger members opportunities like adults are offered for spiritual growth at WUS.**

A breakdown of key elements are below.

Definitions

CURRICULUM/CONTENT: Transmit faith's traditions, symbols, theology, history, heroes, values, and practices

COMMUNITY: Who are we as: UUs, as congregation, theologically, in a multi-generational community? Activities and opportunities to build connections across a spectrum of diversities- theological and otherwise

COVENANT: "Golden Rule" without disengagement How to bring best self to faith community and invites us to practice forgiveness

CONTEXT: Where are we and who are our neighbors? Understand dominant culture in relation to congregation's theology & identity. Activities that respond to real needs and carry the spiritual work in the community including interfaith partners, service agencies. Service opportunities?

ROCKS: Foundational themes of what groups need to know in a broad sense

WINS: specific goals (Exposures & Experiences)

Pre-school-1st grade

- curriculum/content

Appendix IV December 2019 & January 2020 RE Committee Members Priorities (cont.)

- o Listen to the children (Emulating WUSYG for consistency)
- o Seven principles for example, World of Wonder that focuses on 7th principle or Circle of Trees
<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/trees>

2nd-4th graders

- curriculum/content:
 - o Listen to the children (Emulating WUSYG for consistency)
 - Important to give the children an opportunity and the time to talk and ask questions. Interact through story.
 - o Interact through story; draw from diverse sources; a combination of moral tales that are:
 - ethically motivated,
 - inclusive of neighboring faiths
 - work towards moral formation
 - read from different perspectives
 - draw from diverse sources: different ethnicity, cultures, age, race
- Teach to the take away through project based learning. (It is important for this age group to keep their hands busy.)
- This would require curriculum development and would be on a three year cycle. Moral Tales only has 16 sessions for classes that are over an hour each and is geared toward 2nd and 3rd grade.

Questions:

- Do the teen teachers need any training?
- Inquire to see if WUSYG/Sam & Haley could give us pointers or training to create consistency in engagement with the children?
- Are we actually following the Moral Tales curriculum?
- Are the children responding to the story?
- If there isn't enough time for reflection during class, could the story be read during the 1st reflection at 10:30 Worship to save time?

5th-6th graders

Priorities:

- Listen to the children (Emulating WUSYG for consistency)
- How do we turn our children into actionable people? Apply to a greater community?
- The program should be a structured way of exploring social justice, volunteering, how to be an up-stander, feel empowered to do the right thing.
- Reading first person accounts go a long way in making an impression on students and driving a point home, building empathy.
- Important to listen to children and model how to think and react to people in need.

Appendix IV December 2019 & January 2020 RE Committee Members Priorities (cont.)

7th-8th graders: OWL

Priorities:

- Offer OWL to the community for 7th and 8th graders. It is the assumption that most WUS youth will take in 7th grade. Important to have a critical mass.
- Try to restart the traditional canoe trip down Aberjona or other teamwork bonding experience? Check with people to see if possible.

8th graders

- Listen to the children (Emulating WUSYG for consistency)
- Needs rebranding, like “Cr8te” instead of F8th in Action or something else so not such a religious connotation so students are scared off
- Needs strong, motivated leader to reinvigorate program
- Teen social justice action; invite service
- Pick a theme each year for volunteer activities?
- Needs to be structured, have more intention, and have more organization
- Open to the community?
- Maybe combine volunteer activities of 5, 6, 8th (volunteering with WUSYG did not work this year)
- Planning ahead- what needs to happen in the spring so that a “Cr8te” can happen in the fall
- Bigger group kick-off event
- This has had low attendance every few years which leads to the failure of the program during those years.

Family opportunities

- Continue potluck theology and find a way to involve older kids
- 5th, 6th, 8th graders tend to be more independent (don't want to go to church later)
- Family worship (not under our purview- who is responsible?)
- Neighboring faiths opportunities (e.g. Tibetan monk connection)
- Intergenerational
- Volunteer opportunities inside & outside church setting

Parent Resources

- Take home materials and website
- Parent discussions and conversations
- Movie/Book discussions (e.g. Harry Potter)

Family Ministry

- Determine whose purview this falls under to ensure the continuation. Is that the RE Committee's role to make sure this happens?

Appendix IV December 2019 & January 2020 RE Committee Members Priorities (cont.)

Resources & Considerations

Essential Elements of UU Faith Formation (adapted from Karen Bellavance-Grace's work, Laura Beth's Embracing Family Ministry Slideshow MassBays, a continuing Ed Rev. Heather took, also see Kim Sweeney's "Death of Sunday School" article)

Preliminary Discussion about RE

- Don't lose the ebb & flow, if don't go to RE, not tragic- so should offer even if low turnout
- Don't judge success on attendance
- For older kids, however, the size of the group matters; younger kids don't need critical mass
- Lucille discussed her experience with the Ethical Society of Boston and developing their RE Program:
 - Used UU as basis for curriculum, also had some opening poems:
 - Ethics in middle school was covered; self care, learning to be present in varying situations, respond to what is going on; relationship with you, family, and the world;
 - What are the kids talking about, relevant conversations
 - Build into the lesson, how are kids responding.
- Maybe the RE Committee should be checking with teen teachers about how are the kids responding?
- **Structure is important-** mimic Service, have a centering (they already do a gathering)
- Learning to be moral is important; Ethics
- Planting seeds- kids may not seem like they are listening, but they do pick up

Wins: Experiences & Exposures- what do we want the children to have?

- **It is important to have curriculum and structure.**

Curriculum Discussion

- OWL should run every year, offered to the entire community, 7th & 8th graders
- Rebrand Faith in Action- to pick up the WUS members who do OWL in 7th grade
- Add Ethics?
- OWL used to have a service component- the canoe trip where they picked up trash. Could we do a service activity with OWL kids?

ROCKS- 7 principles; Morals; Planting seeds

WINS- Experiences and Exposures that we want the children to be exposed to and/or experience

Appendix IV December 2019 & January 2020 RE Committee Members Priorities (cont.)

Other things that came up

- Potluck Theology- mostly for the community aspect, it is not a lot of theology
- Family Worship- mostly for newcomers
- One person would prefer to drop Religious Ed before Family Worship
- Parents need to understand the importance of lighting the chalice at Worship. If they choose not to have their children participate, it is ok if the same children keep lighting.
- Altruism
- The importance of ritual and practice

Volunteering to support ABC House

Appendix V

Sample Job Description

DRE Job Description for Melrose Unitarian Universalist Church

Congregation and Position Information

Congregation: Melrose Unitarian Universalist Church

Address: 70 West Emerson Street, Melrose, MA 02176

Position Title: Director of Religious Education

Time Frame: Looking for a permanent Director of Religious Education at 32 hours per week over 10 months

Goals: MUUC is looking for a DRE that can help the congregation support the following religious education goals:

1. Maintain and support a strong early childhood and elementary age cooperative church school infrastructure
2. Build a strong youth program for junior and senior youth groups. Bridge engagement from elementary church school to junior, junior youth group to senior youth group and senior youth group to young adult.
3. With RE committee and other committees, explore, plan, integrate or support opportunities to grow and develop religious education and learning across all ages

Statement of Accountability

The DRE will report to the Minister on a day to day basis and will work collaboratively as a member of the MUUC staff team. It is expected that the DRE will receive and seek guidance and advice from the Religious Education Committee and, as appropriate, the Board of Directors.

Responsibilities

MUUC is prioritizing classic DRE responsibilities along with some life span faith formation. Our commitment is to strengthening our child and youth program and should time and creativity allow to build life span faith formation in ways that strengthen our congregation overall.

- Maintain early and elementary cooperative church school infrastructure with RE Committee and Church School Volunteers. Includes administrative and light programming tasks such as planning story calendar for the year, volunteer recruitment, fall teacher orientation and training, classroom maintenance, calculating weekly attendance counts and trends for planning.

Appendix V Sample Job Description (cont.)

- Program and build infrastructure for junior and senior youth development. Includes assessing, researching and developing an approach to strengthening youth education, activities and programs. Activities include curriculum selection and program development, training and support of volunteer adult congregants, engagement with youth, provide strong administrative and programming support and direction.
- Program and help build transitions between child and youth programs and youth and young adult (e.g., coming of age, bridging)
 - Manage and sustain biennial OWL program for middle school youth.

DRE Job Description for Melrose Unitarian Universalist Church

- Continually develop and implement long-term planning for the growth and strengthening of religious education programs with the potential to include future life span learning. • Support the Minister and committees in creating a vital intergenerational congregation with children and youth integrated into all parts of congregational life (e.g., time for all ages, multi generational worship, annual Youth and RE services; worship involvement)
- Coordinate with minister and church staff for seamless connection of religious education activities with ministerial, congregant and community activities of church life (annual calendar, themes, weekly sermons, child and youth centered services, intergenerational services, time for all ages, etc.)
- Meet and coordinate with RE Committee, Church Council, and Board monthly, as well as coordinate with other committees engaged with RE programming activities
- Manage and report on church school and youth group attendance trends; build to include additional life span learning opportunities as developed. With RE committee, coordinate annual church school and youth school registration and volunteer outreach
- Communicate with the congregation (e.g., newsletters, congregational emails); Collaborate with the RE Committee to prepare the annual RE budget and annual report
- Service to the wider UU RE Community; represent Melrose UU at professional DRE events and trainings

Experience, Knowledge Skills, and Abilities

A successful candidate will have:

- A commitment to UUA Principles and the mission of Melrose UU Church
- Interest in Spirit Play religious curriculum; prior experience or training in delivery methodology a plus

Appendix V Sample Job Description (cont.)

- Strong interest in and ability to support youth programming and development; familiarity with youth curriculum options including OWL; experience with youth transition programs a plus (e.g., coming of age and bridging)
- Hold an RE philosophy that is supportive of lifespan learning; Interest in engaging children, youth, and adult congregants across the life span.
 - Demonstrated planning, organizational and administrative skills
 - Prior experience organizing and managing volunteers
 - Excellent written and verbal communication skills
 - Working knowledge of Microsoft Office; Google docs a plus
 - Energetic and creative; personable and patient.
 - Ability to work collaboratively with other staff, congregational leaders, and volunteers. • Sensitive to the pastoral concerns of the congregation as to collaboration with minister in areas of pastoral need

DRE Job Description for Melrose Unitarian Universalist Church

Compensation

Salary: Based on experience commensurate with a mid-range Geo 5 salary for a Religious Educator level at a small-sized church pro-rated for 32 hours over 10 months (late August-late June)

Benefits: Include health, dental, disability, and life insurance, sick time, retirement contribution

Professional Expenses: MUUC will provide the DRE with a budget per church year for professional expenses including books, dues, and training fees.

Additional Information

See Attached:

[MUUC Mission Statement](#)

[MUUC Religious Education Program Statement for Children and Youth](#)

[MUUC Religious Education Pamphlet](#)

Description of MUUC Religious Education Program

MUUC runs a cooperative volunteer religious education program that includes elementary age church school program for pre-K through fifth grade. MUUC also has a middle school age youth group (Junior Yootes) and a high school age youth group (Senior Yootes) staffed/facilitated by church volunteers. Volunteers also staff a nursery for babies and children ages 3 months to 3 years.

Appendix V Sample Job Description (cont.)

Church services typically start with children and youth upstairs in the sanctuary. After beginning rituals, there is a Story or Time for All Ages, after which the congregation sings the children and Junior Yootes out of the Sanctuary and they go downstairs to the classrooms. The elementary aged church school and Junior Yootes meeting run from approximately 10:45- 11:45.

The elementary aged church school has the strongest foundation of programming and volunteer support. It is based on the Spirit Play program with stories that map back to themes rotated annually (The Golden Rule, Judeo Christian Roots, Interdependent Web). The stories are age appropriate. MUUC spent a large amount of effort to build this program and looking for a DRE that can maintain this strong foundation while focusing development and programming efforts on the older youth.

The Junior Yootes meet at the same time as the rest of the church school. The curriculum is less definitive. We have used a number of different curriculum bases over the years including Neighboring Faiths, Created Equal, and other Tapestry of Faith Curriculum. MUUC would like to

DRE Job Description for Melrose Unitarian Universalist Church

strengthen the volunteer training and curriculum base for this age group including the transition/bridge between 5th grade coming from the spirit play program to the Junior Yootes.

The Senior Yootes have traditionally met on Sunday afternoons. The Senior Yootes program is at a crossroads. The current group is very small with approximately 4-5 older high school youth. Next year will include five Junior Youth, who have just gone through the OWL program, moving up. We want to build a program for the Senior Yootes that will keep this next class engaged while creating a positive last year for the older youth. We have large demographics of younger kids in the church school program and we want to build the junior and senior youth programs to serve our current youth and welcome the next generation in.

Our congregation offers a vibrant cooperative volunteer base supporting the RE program. Orientation and training are provided at the beginning of each church year and volunteers are recognized for their time and commitment at a special RE service at the end of each year. Coming of Age bridge between 5th grade and Junior Yootes is included in a church service as is Youth Sunday where the Senior Yootes plan and execute the service and also bridge to becoming young adults. Church committees such as social justice, green sanctuary, and fellowship have worked closely with the RE program to integrate specific content and experiential opportunities for children and youth including sustainable cooking classes and creating bowls for the Hunger Banquet. We would like to continue and build on these successful programs including a mentorship program with congregation members and youth as well as other intergenerational opportunities.

Appendix V Sample Job Description (cont.)

While MUUC has engaged in a number of life span learning activities including covenant groups, green sanctuary film series, special social justice lectures and group activities, we find ourselves wanting and needing some formal religious education opportunities to enhance these activities. Several ideas that we would like to explore with a new DRE would be a class for new families and parents around stewarding their children's religious education as well as their own. Many of our members did not grow up in a UU community and new families often join attracted to UU values, but without a foundation in UU principles and what their children are learning downstairs. We would also like to explore greater connection between the youth programs and the adult congregation including mentoring opportunities, youth engagement in congregational events and congregational involvement in youth led activities. We see this as a way to strengthen our youth programming while increasing opportunities for intergenerational lifespan experiences.

After 10 years of settled ministry, MUUC's minister will be retiring in June of 2016. A DRE joining the MUUC staff will be working with an Interim Minister and transition team for the next two years as the congregation embarks on a ministerial search process.

Appendix VI

Notes from Cottage Meetings 02-08-21, 02-14-21, and 03-09-21

In attendance on February 8:

Erica Baron, Facilitator. Patty Cameron, Vicky Coccoluto, Claire MacNeil, James Pidacks, Kathy Richardson, Judy Murray, Terry Currier, Lee Barton, Lauri Clark, Sam Wilson, Terril Levering, Ryan Levering, Maggie Russell, John Russell, Karen Erikson, Karen Caputo, Marilyn Mullane, Sarah Milt, Deb Walsh, Carol Delaney, Phil Coonley, Naomi Magnoni, Fritzie Nace, John Kramer, Rebecca Kelly Morgan, Erin Graham.

In attendance February 14:

Erica Baron, Facilitator. Patty Cameorn, Rev. Heather Janules, John Kramer, Liz Lintz, Judy Murray, Gordie MacIntosh, Margaret Lowrey, Brad Steele, Clair MacNeil, Fritzie Nace, Erin Graham, Matthew Bronski, Terry Currier, Naomi Magnoni, Kathryn Maffei, Robbie Brown, Sheila Correa, Peter Bladwin, Martin Newhouse, Nancy Scott, Patrick Draine.

In attendance March 9 for Staff Cottage Meeting:

Rev. Heather Janules, Rebecca Kelly-Morgan, John Kramer, Sam Wilson, Patty Cameron (Visioning & SC), Terry Currier (SC, Visioning, RE, Hiring), Erin Graham (Visioning & RE).

All sessions were facilitated by Erica Baron, UUA Consultant with an identical agenda. Erica gave an overview of next steps: New group draft a job position based on Visioning Report and feedback. Feedback from cottage meetings will be used to to inform next steps

Erica set some ground rules- honest feedback, conversation worth and dignity, keep it current, former staff & visioning committee, focus on big picture. Erica asked questions and asked participants to not only answer the questions, but also to identify the value that the answer embodied. She helped to summarize the values and offered some UU perspective.

Question: When you read the report, what is one thing that made you excited or generated an idea?

- **UUA milestones and rites of passage:** Many commented, including staff, on recognizing milestones, the UU rites of passage reinvigorated. There is the temptation to avoid “churchiness.” but, there is excitement that people want UU values and tradition in the program and rites of passage. These can be powerful experiences.
- **The focus of the new position:** new person strictly RE, and recommendation that adult growth & learning done by each committee; staff also commented on this benefit by only having to concentrate on RE and not other congregational aspects like worship; New person will be responsible for children through grade 8 (maybe grade 5) - Rebecca does more than this, so maybe $\frac{3}{4}$ time is reasonable - the focused attention might be attractive to prospective job applicants
- **The report’s focus on the 6th - 8th graders** and the recommendation for a potential middle school youth group was viewed as a benefit, especially because of the psych-spiritual support needed for that age group.

Appendix VI Cottage Meeting Notes 2021 (cont.)

- **Liked the comprehensive review of RE**, a lot of changes suggested and not just slide along in the same old path.
- **Renewed commitment to the children of the congregation and RE**, the table in appendix gave hope- churches 1/2 our size still have programs; we are told that RE out of vogue, but churches still doing well, give hope that there can be growth. Struck, impressed, amount of work-particularly middle school and b/c as a family who came in OWL was concerned wouldn't be able to afford to do WUSYG any longer.
- **OWL Recognition** that the OWL program is successful, might look at partnering UCC church.

Erica added that OWL was co-published, but UCC not as familiar (fringe maybe UCC) up their alley b/c they helped write the program

- One person thought the **report captured every thought heard floating around for the past few years**; appreciated suggestions, feel excited potential looking at church, feel encouraged, good guidance for search team; spark- hoping for post-WUSYG programming/group. This was echoed by staff: There is energy and movement toward young adult programming - it was only one line in the report, but people are already running with it.
- **Volunteer teachers:** Several were glad to see volunteers might be coming back. Possibility of getting multiple generations - e.g. grandparents and people w/o kids teaching in RE.

Erica growing up UU remembers that too and the relationships formed

- **Success of WUSYG service trips should be emulated:** the feedback from kids on WUSYG service trips is positive, the relationship important, huge learning experience, anyway we can replicate in the RE program for younger children would be good
- **Excitement about the beginning of the process** - seeing the stuff that the report brought out in terms of hopes and aspirations - bringing that out for reflection and action - ton of energy and time in the conversations

Appendix VI Cottage Meeting Notes 2021 (cont.)

Question: When you read the report, did you experience resistance to any of the suggested changes to the RE program? What does that resistance tell you about what you value in RE or in the congregation?

Low numbers:

- **Low numbers and failure:** Concern about the low numbers in RE. Providing programming that works with the curriculum tough with low class sizes and inconsistent attendance. This can turn children off to RE. It is hard to build an RE program when the numbers are so low already. Concern that it is less likely to succeed. Sports is cutting into church and RE attendance
- **Question about number of children-** don't know the size of population, youth group always a good number, OWL good, how big are K-6? Answer: attendance fluctuates on Sundays and this has been true for a number of years; for example, 3rd -4th grade theoretically 8-9 kids, realistically 2-3, often only 1; 5-6th graders: 7 in theory 2 of 3 show up, OWL small class started at 9 then attrition, f8th in action 4 people expressed interest, but didn't want to be in a group that small
- **Wary of assumption of success with more participation in the program** - e.g. middle school youth program might not work for our current numbers - outside the scope of the report to figure out how to get to the size to make the ideas viable - e.g. how many youth do we need for a middle school youth group to be a safe space? How do we get there? It doesn't magically happen - not in the scope of the report, but a thing that needs attention.

Volunteers- concerns about recruitment and burnout

- **Concern that the volunteer model doesn't work.** There is resistance that there is some history with volunteers not working, all the years on RE committee was told that model doesn't work, burned out people; poll a lot of the RE parents are not interested in volunteering b/c they are looking for spiritual growth themselves; at least do it in a different way then before.
- **Finding volunteers even for non-RE committees and duties is difficult** volunteer point of resistance, will there be enough volunteers to go around? In the past RE teaching was mostly parents, but there were a lot more parents; how that would that unfold? 1x/mos volunteering; organizing volunteers is an art; training and support around curriculum is crucial (make it manageable for volunteers, supporting volunteers throughout the year). The move to paid teachers was because of burn out, parents want to be in worship service, parents were not good at teaching. But there were a lot parents, been through it before back and forth not sure what the answer is. Curriculum, question: do we have to do the same every Sunday- could we consider skipping a Sunday, not do the same thing every week, keep quality up, minimize burn out?

Appendix VI Cottage Meeting Notes 2021 (cont.)

Erica- wanting to avoid burn out, and making sure that people get what they need. Congregations go through this, onto the right thing, not assuming that it just parents is a good step. But also training, recognition, resources outside congregation; region can help support

Erica- many congregations have same issues; fewer people at church, less free time than in prior generations; cover, next generation is very specific; a little bit of spiritual experimentation, and let things emerge; invite with the part of yourself search experimentation

Erica- Lift up also, we live in MA more UU congregation any if everyone have the same conversation, close enough of neighbors to do that. Avenue to explore- reaching out to towns that don't have a congregation, but also those that do.

Are we asking and expecting too much?

- $\frac{3}{4}$ time and salary - part of the point, and **wonder about the sustainability of the role** - are we putting too much into this role if there are fewer hours - is the salary sustainable - will people stay for very short terms?
- **Some questions of things that sound good but how will they actually work?** Like numbers and logistics of meeting times, etc. - there are examples of congregations near us that are doing stuff - there are so many options - which will work???
- **Resistance to the number of ideas and hopes, felt that it would spread too thin;** how most efficiently use the resources we have in a productive program that we have; appreciative of earnestness of

Erica- value, not sacrifice quality for quantity

- **Concern that the adult programming not to be jettisoned and turned over to each committee.** Adult programming has been a big draw and way that other congregations have grown.

Erica- QUALITY of adult programming is important; that should be continued

Combining middle school grades to form a youth group

- **Concern about combining middle schoolers;** maturity of 6th-8th BIG range; DELICATE, time, need to be very careful ages put together; most middle schools keep younger kids apart from older, these are tender years and care must be taken.

Middle school programming

Appendix VI Cottage Meeting Notes 2021 (cont.)

- **Wonder if there is other programming that could be boosted that could fill the void between children's programming and youth group** - maybe there are options we haven't explored that we can find

Fear of failure and repeating same mistakes.

- Relationship is the core of our faith and a central value and central to effective RE - **will the new DRE have the relationships, esp. At the beginning to make it work?**
- **Some things have been done and then stopped - why??** - tend to defer to Rebecca about why we stopped - but don't want to lose the institutional memory - can we be more imaginative? What other innovations are out there?

Timeline

- **puzzled by timeline**, 2 years interim, 2 of another person develop work program, seem like this was going to take a long time; why is timeline so long?

Erica clarified- either or- That's not sequential, development point; responding to report, moving forward

Teen Teachers

- **There was concern that the report was suggesting that teen teachers no longer be used**

Erica- value, young to younger relationship

- Resistant idea youth safe congregation, **teen teachers one of the only things that has been working these past few years**, e.g. children have identified strongly with teen teachers/models, little bit nervous that something that worked we couldn't do anymore
- **Keep teens connected**, those who taught grew up in the re program, (b/c might not see them again!), has helped to keep the teens visible (sit is church) and involved; is there someway that could be worked out; also key to have paid situation. value the relationship between teens and younger kids - want a way to engage the teens on Sunday morning - having meaning and contributing to congregational life is important for the teens - teens provided a consistency that the adults did not
- **Questions and clarifications needed around Safe Congregations and the teen teachers.**
Can there be both adults and teens in the classroom? Two "Adults" in the room is to prevent harm, and to report harm, so the two need to be in a relative position of power and unrelated enough for that to work, also protects the adults from accusations/misunderstandings of harm that did not actually happen

Appendix VI Cottage Meeting Notes 2021 (cont.)

Question- anything want to say, but doesn't fit neatly in question?

- **Time study- how time is actually spent, RE and youth coordinator, appreciate where times goes, alter time, reflect priorities**, if there isn't a culture, might feel like might an imposition, but how long it takes to do certain things, culture of tracking time of staff and volunteers
- **Benchmarking other congregations:** In appendix 1- table membership committee should take a look, benchmarking other churches to see what is working in other congregations

Erica- not suggesting to not look to others, but don't assume that what they did will work at WUS

- **Interdependency of RE and membership and pledges-** parents went up in their pledges because they saw how important youth programming now opposite direction, money . Membership, RE, and finance all interconnected
- Curious of the aforementioned cohort of increased pledges, and where are those parents now. **What is important,- social justice, service work is important, why did parents come to WUS?** Were they also looking for spiritual, what would make it appealing now? Is there too much over-scheduling? How much we have to run around? What would it take for families that came through doors, why didn't stick, why families leaving, not sure what we could differently, reach out to those serve that need; vacation church school in summer?

Other notes from staff cottage meeting.

- Incentivize growth? Good reasons not to, but something to consider
- Marketing - can the DRE be part of the marketing/publicity for the program?
- Collaboration as a way to build critical mass
- Time to draft a job description - visioning report will inform that - still unclear what are we asking this person to do?

Erica- last question.

Knowing that a strong RE program requires the support of the whole congregation not just in spirit but in practice as well, what can you offer to the flourishing of the WUS RE program?

Specific answers in chat (see saved text). Overall:

- Two congregants offered to teach some RE; One offered to support teachers
- One offered to help with Family Worship
- One offered to help with the little ones and help with RE if there was a curriculum