

# Winchester Unitarian Society's Personal Meeting Room

Mon, 2/8 6:44PM 1:17:21

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

congregation, people, volunteers, church, report, parents, kids, great, thought, program, years, work, important, group, standing committee, programming, ucc, idea, feel, question



01:17

Welcome to the early bird. Log on in case I had trouble logging on.



01:26

Yeah, I wasn't entirely sure where I had put the link so I figured I better come and find that, and then it was right there so it's fine.



01:35

Oh good. Well, it couldn't you know, I didn't hear back from anybody. They did send out a reminder today. It was also announced twice on the Sunday worship. Once at the very beginning and then I put it in the chat before everybody left. So, hopefully.



01:57

Yeah, we'll see.



01:58

Yeah, I know that the rec committee. I don't want to say they had like a panic attack but they they definitely sort of said, Oh crap, we got to plan for the future, you know, you

know, thinking. What's next, and so that prompted Fritz's email to you. Because I put it back to standing committee and I said, out we're done our job. We did what you asked us to do. Now you go find a new dare. And so, you know, I think, I think it's snuck up on everybody.



02:33

Yeah. Okay, I saw that I have an email but I haven't had a chance to read it yet so that's just when, What do we do,



02:43

it's pretty much, you know, what's the typical timeline. You know when you're when you're searching, you know, and I would just, I hope that the decision Standing Committee makes is to go for an interim, because I think we've got a lot of things to, to figure out.



03:04

Okay. Cool. Well answer that one I got a chance, but I think if you want an actual, I would suggest that they make that decision quickly because there's very few people with experiences interims and they already know that they're going to be available or not. And so, yeah, the sooner you can, like, get in ahead of the, well,



03:29

how specific, do you have to be in it in a job posting Can you just say we don't know what the heck we're doing come help us.



03:36

I wouldn't put it like that.



03:39

Being a little tongue in cheek but you know I think that, you know, we're really looking for somebody who can help us, you know, find our navigate the whole system and figure out what it is that we want because to cottage meetings aren't going to answer everybody's

questions.



03:53

No, but I do think you are. So, you know, when I got this job I was looking. I was leaving parish ministry and I was looking at a lot of different things. And one of the things I considered was doing religious education for a while, and from the other side I feel like all the job that I was looking at including dairy jobs were more interesting, the more specific the congregation could be not necessarily about what they wanted the program to look like, but about who they were and what the challenges were and what sort of person they were imagining.



04:27

Yeah,



04:27

I found this when I was in search as a minister to like some congregations descriptions of themselves were so like could apply to every year your congregation I've ever had, tell me anything. And I feel like the work that the visioning team has done is given you a really great found, I mean that they could just copy some of this report into the job description with, you know, some relatively minor changes and be pretty clear about where you are and what you're looking for and what happens, I mean I know you don't know what happens next, but that is a thing right like to help us. Switch.



05:03

Because we have, I mean we're fortunate we haven't had a lot of staff turnover. And, you know, when so everybody that's on Standing Committee has not gone through a search before. And so I think you know if you can provide some guidance, it would be so appreciated.



05:21

Yeah, I'll do my best.



05:22

Thank you.



05:24

The person on our team who like really knows this stuff is on vacation but I think she's coming back next week so she can also tell me the pieces that I don't know from experience yet. Perfect. So yeah.



05:42

How are you holding up with all this quarantining. Not for me 11. I had to write an article for our newsletter work today. And it's like, okay, we're 11 months in and we used to this math stuff yeah



05:56

well so we we eventually moved, I can't remember if I told you this but we bought a house and outside of Boston. We closed on it the day that my son's daycare closed.



06:06

Oh geez,



06:07

and so for four months. I had this job, my wife had a relatively new full time job. And we had a four year old. And so, like, it's not like you can put them in a corner with a book like somebody has to be on him at all times. And so we have this very intense schedule that involve neither never both of us working at the same time, like we were just having Yeah. And after four months of that we were like we can't take this anymore and so I came to Vermont, to be near my parents so they can do some childcare. Um, but that means that we own this house outside of Boston that we're not currently living in and so like once a month or so I go for the weekend to like paint and stuff, because it's easier to paint, and all when underfoot. And also just to like, remember that we own it, make sure it's still standing and all that kind of stuff. So I went this past weekend. The plan was actually took some days off this time I don't usually but the plan was to go on Thursday night. Work

Friday Saturday Sunday and drive home on Monday morning. But Friday morning when I woke up the pipe said frozen. Oh no. And so, you know, we got that we got them thought out or whatever but like, then Sunday night it happened again, or Saturday night or something. And so it was like, Okay, well I better stay until the plumber can actually insulate it right and so this thing that was supposed to be a couple days turned into a whole week. And usually when I do this. So if, if you're coming to Vermont from Massachusetts, you have to quarantine for two weeks. Usually when I do this, I don't leave the house, so I feel like I, you know, I get gas before I leave Vermont. Yeah, all my food and I like don't interact with anybody but this time there were plumbers in the house. So now we're in like actual quarantine quarantine. Wow, hidden in the butt. But anyway, yeah.



07:57

I know my daughter got her first vaccine this afternoon. Oh, that's the first time I've like seen a little glimmer at the end of the tunnel. Yeah, for her anyway. Right.



08:08

She like what



08:11

she's got disabilities. Okay.



08:16

People young enough to be her daughter. Oh no,



08:18

he's 37 years old. She's



08:21

an adult, but right but like in Vermont its people 75 and up who can get it right now. Yeah,



08:27

yeah. Same with Massachusetts, I can't get one yet. Right. I try, I tried to sneak in. I got the last appointment of the afternoon thinking. All right, maybe they'll have some extra doses, because you know that you have to use it up in the whole vial. You can't re refrigerate it, you know, and it was like, I'll volunteer to take some off your hands but,



08:56

yeah, my younger sister and her husband who have, like, are not in any category of should be able to get the vaccine yet there was like a hospital near their house that was had all these doses that were going to go bad so they got it.



09:08

Yeah, I mean that's what they've been doing in some of those open parking lot, places where people who don't have appointments, hope that they'll have extra at the end of the day, because the no shows. Yeah. So we'll say, I heard Massachusetts really is like 38 or something like that in the nation for rolling this out. Because people in other states who aren't in any kind of priority group and Massachusetts have already gotten vaccinated. Yeah. Plus, they also had more vaccine, which



09:43

I don't know what that problem was, yeah, my in laws who are old enough young enough that they couldn't get it in Massachusetts, but they live in California, and they got it. So yeah. Yeah. Yep. Hello. Arriving folks



09:59

that look like they're still trying to connect to audio.




10:03


Yes, well maybe Linda is connected hi Linda if you can hear me.





10:14


Yes, I hear you. So I'm, I'm a newbie at every bit of this I'm and I get restless in my chair at a certain point, so I'll be listening, so. Okay. do you mind if I go back to muted so you don't pick up any stray noise. No.


 10:36  
Okay.


 10:37  
I want to be supportive though because that report was Whoa, and I haven't, I haven't got into an append. One of the appendices and read about a little bit about where you're, you're at in 2018. So that was interesting too. So, not too far though a lot of dependencies. There are.

 10:59  
I found this is probably because I'm, you know, church nerd but I found the chart of what all the neighboring congregations are using for Korea, really fascinating.

 11:10  
Yeah. There was a lot in there that was just down to earth practical, easy to absorb, you know, feedback so, but you know what to do with it so I'll be listening I'm about to mute. Okay.

 11:26  
Thanks. Thanks for joining us.

 11:36  
All right, we have a busy household here too, so I have to go and get my daughter connected to her zoom bingo game. I'll be right back.

 12:36

Good evening. Good evening Claire. America. Good evening.



13:05

Good evening.



13:16

All right.



13:50

Good evening everyone. It's gonna give everyone a few more minutes to get here.



14:50

Let me turn that noise off, that's gonna be annoying. Okay, it is seven o'clock so I'm gonna start talking I assume some other folks will come in while I do so but thank you everyone for coming tonight. My name is Erica Barron, I'm one of the congregational consultants with the New England region of the Unitarian Universalist Association. And I'm just here basically to facilitate this conversation because sometimes when we have big conversations it's easier for somebody who doesn't have a stake in it to sort of hold the space so that's what I'm here for tonight. Um, I want to start by just commending your visioning team for a very comprehensive and detailed report and all the hard work that went into producing it. And Patti sent it to me I just was so impressed with the commitment to quality programming that is sustainable for the congregation. So, you know, we have kind of two things there one is the quality and the other is the sustainability and there's sometimes, often, and a little bit of tension and I think the visioning team has done a really incredible job, sort of looking for a path to sustainability that doesn't compromise quality. So awesome work fishing team, and tonight's conversation is a benchmark on a longer journey. So after tonight. The next step will be for a new group of people to draft a job description for the religious education position, based on the work of the visioning team and the congregations feedback that we're gathering tonight and Sunday. And then proceed with hiring someone to fill that position. So tonight, what we're doing is getting your feedback about this report, and the work of the visioning team to inform that next step. And so, I just want to go over some guidelines for our conversation tonight. So we want this to be an opportunity to gather honest feedback, and ideas from you, members of the congregation. We also want this to be a



conversation that affirms the worth and dignity of every person including current and former staff, and the visioning team members. So to that end, I invite you to speak freely from your own perspective and experience to not assume or argue with the perspective or experience of others and to focus your comments on the big picture and on the ideas and the report, rather than discussing individual people. Luckily this is a very big picture report so that should be relatively easy to do. And I'm just going to note that in a minute I'm going to be inviting you into some breakout groups, and when you come back from the great big break out groups. We will be recording the rest of the zoom meeting so that we can give it to the visioning team for their reference, and the Standing Committee, so that we can refer back to it as needed. So, it's impossible to record and breakout groups. So, once we come back, we will be recording. So any questions about any of that before we break you off. Okay. So for the first question, you're going to be in a breakout room of about five people or so, and they're going to be random so there's no, there's no ulterior motive to who you end up in a breakout group with, and we are going to ask that your group appoints a reporter to tell us the important points of your discussion and when you come back, and also to take notes that you can send to Patti for the things that you don't have time to fully report on verbally because we really want to capture your thoughts. So, in the chat momentarily we'll be the email to send those notes to. And I'm going to ask you to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak before you have a more general conversation about common themes areas of divergence. Other ideas sparked by your conversation etc So let everyone talk, and then take it where you will. So, here is your question I'm also going to put this in the chat.



19:51

So there's the email to send your notes do and here is your question. When you read this report. What is one thing that made you excited about the future of religious education in your congregation. This could be either something directly suggested in the report, or an idea that it sparked for you. But where are you excited, what what is good and got you interested in wanting to do more. And we are going to come back. Wow, that is wrong on my thing, we are going to come back. That's about 725 so you have about 20 minutes in these groups. So, I am hoping that the groups are ready to be opened that true today Do we have groups.



21:04

I don't see an option for breakout rooms on this.



21:07

Okay, well, there goes that idea. Okay, we're not gonna be in breakout groups. Um, so instead let's answer this question in the large group. So, you have two options. One is to unmute yourself and tell us something in the report that really excited you and the other option is to type into the chat. And at this point, then let's start the recording, something you can. You have the power to do,



21:42

I can do that. Awesome. Okay.



21:47

So what's what's exciting, what's getting you fired up. Yes, Karen.



21:57

I was very excited to see the part about recognizing our kind of milestone I want to make sure I had it correct but this idea that rites of passages and milestones would be consistent and kind of reinvigorated.



22:16

Yeah, thank you. What else.



22:22

Oh, yes.



22:25

I like the focus so that the new person that we hired strictly going to be R ri. And the growth and learning will be handled by each committee.



22:38

Great, thank you. What else is exciting. Yes, I'm Tara leveraging.



22:49

I was excited by the focus on the sixth through eighth graders which have kind of gotten forgotten lately, creating a youth group for them I thought was an awesome idea, which I hadn't thought about so that they feel tied and feel ready to continue on to what CJ. And also just getting their programming a little more structured so that you know that they have something to do on Sunday mornings and with



23:16

just with their verbs,



23:18

got that. Cool. Great. I'm Kathy Richardson did I see your hand.



23:30

Okay, can you hear me. Yep.



23:33

I am pleased that we



23:35

are



23:36

intentionally looking as a whole church community at the whole area of our UI and what we want to happen, because I think there have been a lot of changes and it's easy to just have a program slide along and the same old path so let's let's take a serious look at all aspects of it. So kudos to the team I thought it was a great report.



24:01

Thank you.



24:07

Well, I like the conclusion that we should commit more fully. Rather than divest of our RV program. I like the cable that suggests that churches half our size have as many people in their re as we do that, that, you know there's there's a lot of literature that says that religious education is out of Vogue so don't waste don't waste too much energy trying to attract young families with kids who want religious education, but the neighboring are the, the bridges that we use for comparison, they're all doing quite you know quite well proportional to their membership and in attracting army people so that gives me a lot of hope that we could be successful in growth.



24:54

Yeah, great. Thank you. Did anyone have things that weren't directly in the report but that when you were reading it You were like, oh, and spun off into other ideas.



25:21

Can I just say I'm sorry I came in late so I missed what the prompt was for the last set of responses.



25:27

Welcome, let me put it in the chat again. Just give me a second. So we are talking about when you read the report. What is one thing that made you excited about the future of RI in your congregation. This could be either something directly in the report, or an idea that it sparked for you. So we've heard some things directly in the report. Go ahead, Lee Barton,



25:54

just something I found very exciting is the recognition of how successful our, our, our whole lives program is and the encouragement to



26:06

recruit



26:09

attendees from other congregations I think it's a great I mean, this is something we. I might add that we might look at partnering with the, the UCC church because they.



26:27

Yeah, that's a great idea. Um, I will tell you from my experience. So, for those of you who, who aren't familiar, deeply familiar with our whole lives sexuality education program. It was CO, published by the UAE and the United Church of Christ or the UCC, and my experience, almost all Unitarian Universalist ministers are familiar with Owl and almost no UCC ministers are so it seems like it was sort of mainstream Unitarian Universalism and French UCC when we developed it, although I think that's changing. So you might have to like do a little more education than you expect with your UCC, you know, neighbors, but it is definitely right up their alley to because they helped us write it so yeah it's a great idea, other exciting things are new ideas that were sparked yesterday.



27:13

I just would like to say first of all that I read the report and its first version and now in its final version and it's just really excellent, I think you guys captured. Pretty much every thought that I've heard floating around for the last several years. And I also really appreciate all of the suggestions for programming through, you know, kindergarten or whatever, all the way through, potentially young adult. I also feel excited that I think there is potential, looking at other churches in the area and the number of families that I see around, who are looking for a lot of the things that I think we offer. So, I feel very encouraged by all that's documented in the report and I think it will give. Whoever becomes our search team, some really good guidance. So there's that and then just in terms of sparking, I would have to say, I've been thinking about wishing and hoping for some sort of post was CG young adult something or other. So I love that that idea is in there. And I think some of them are old enough to have their own kids now so maybe they could even be a cycle back in. And I like sort of the ideas that were in there about Middle School. I think that's a group that really needs some psycho spiritual support. And so I think that was really neat some of those ideas. And the one other thing that I really liked was, let me just read it because I, I,



29:09

sorry.



29:11

I was really nerdy and I printed it all out, double hated it but I think it's gonna be a document that we want to keep referring back to so let me see if I can find. Oh, that we would benefit from consistent cohesive continuum of programming with built in rituals and traditional UVU rites of passage. I just think that's so much of what spirituality. How we can embody and Mark spiritual growth so I like that. Yeah,



29:48

there other things that were exciting or ideas that that you had that were sparked by this report. Yes, Deborah. I'm you're still muted Deborah.



30:04

There we go. Um,



30:06

I was struck by an excited and just impressed by the document as a whole and the amount of work I I saw Laurie, my neighbor today coming in the door I'm like you guys did a boatload of work there, on this and that I was really impressed I wasn't sure what I was expecting but it was very well done. And I was particularly pleased and excited about just the middle school and high school side as a family that came in with Owl and stuck through with CG and whatnot, I guess I worried, a little bit like,



30:39

Oh no, they're



30:40

gonna not they but we're not going to be able to afford to do you know all the great things that we do with with CG and, and, and I'm just pleased to wanting to continue that

and to add in the middle school component. So, but, kudos to everybody who worked on that report. Awesome.



30:59

Thank you. Yeah. Okay. Anyone else before we were ready to move on to our next question or is there anything else you want to really lift up as exciting and



31:11

energizing. Yes. JOHN Russell. You need to unmute. We can't hear you yet. Can you unmute.



31:26

I'm not sure I would use the word exciting, but someone recently used the word please so I'll stick with that. I was pleased to see a return of the potential value of teaching being done by volunteers from the society, whether or not something we can actually bring to fruition, I don't know, it's the way it used to be many many years ago, and Maggie said my children now are 60 years old. And they went through the program at the Winchester Unitarian society. And I will tell you what they remember so much about the religious education program as it was then what they remember, is the adult Unitarians members of the church that they associated with as they went through the re program. They remember their names and who they were, they appreciate them very much. And I will tell you that I found it very valuable at the time to have them associating with a bunch of people who had the same crazy ideas their parents did was a nice way of reinforcement. So if, if we can go back to that and try to go back to that and do it successfully. I think it will have a very salutary impact on the program.



33:00

Thank you. Yes. And you're totally right. Um, I was raised in you, you are a two and that's what I remember too. So yeah, I'm here Oh, yes. Thank you.



33:15

I just want to



33:19

also say follow up with john was that I, the feedback that I've gotten from, from kids who are on that service trips that I've done on it was that relationship. That was very important that they saw these adults they were working hand in hand with them and so there was a huge learning experience, and a personal experience that happened on those service trips and any way that we can replicate that in the re program,



33:47

I think that's very valuable so



33:49

I'll just hold that up,



33:51

thank you john for saying that.



33:59

Okay, I'm gonna move us to our next question. I will also put in the chat. So, when you read the report, did you experience resistance to any of the suggested changes to the ri program. And what does the resistance tell you about what you value in our UI or in the congregation. So, like I feel like when people make suggestions. And we resist it. Some of that is just, well, somebody suggesting changing something change. Ah, um, but often if we can sort of hold that and interrogate it a little it's because something we value is. There's some tension there. So, again, when you read the report, did you experience resistance to any of the suggested changes. And what does that resistance tell you about what you value in re or in the congregation. Yes, clear.



35:10

Claire right.



35:12



So I'm going to tell you about experience that I had many years ago, I was a very active for a long time in a small, tiny EU fellowship in New York State. And I've. Um, I went through everything teaching, Dr. A what they didn't call it dr d was just the RA chair and children. So what I will share is that one year, my daughter was in a class with one other child, and he didn't come all the time. And it was a very negative experience for her, and she left our faith and went to the faith of her friend, whereas my next daughter had more children in her group, probably four, and has stayed with it and is now, raising her own children. So, the problem of of providing groups that work for the children as well as for the curriculum is really tough. Just to say I know where you are.



36:21

Thank you. Ryan Lovering.



36:29

Um,



36:30

I was one of the things I was a little bit resistant to. I have some cynicism with regards to volunteerism, in the congregation. Both because of historical reasons that we went with the volunteer model, and then it was chosen purposely that we should move away from that model. And so all of the years I've been on the RA committee that was sort of the thing that we were always told was that, oh no that's really not going to work. We tried that before and it's not really the model that works it burnt out people, nobody was interested in coming anymore. And just doing a poll, like sort of in my mind of people who are currently involved in the re in terms of having children of themselves, a lot of them would not really be necessarily interested in volunteer, because they sort of look for the spiritual side of worship services and things, especially if they have at the same time, but also they might feel they might push them away from the church, so I'm a little bit cynical about going back to that model, at least without doing it in a different way than it was before.



37:35

Thank you. And it's really important to lift up and it sounds to me like the values that you're that are important to you are one that parents get actual church, and another is

that we don't burn out our volunteers, that, that participation in the congregation that's life giving and not draining, and I, I'm maybe reading a little into this but maybe also, we also want the people finding volunteers to not be burning out by people saying no. Is that accurate.



38:07

Yes, often that's even harder. Yes.



38:10

Great, thank you. I'm sorry, somebody



38:17

on that point I actually want to make one of the things about the report I thought resonated with, with myself was the notion that you wouldn't limit your volunteer search to the parents who are the sets have have their have a plenty of what child, child rearing experience, but for other people who don't have children or people who have grandchildren, but they're 500 miles away. It's, it's, it's a wonderful way to stay connected with, with that, an age group that serves you well when you have the opportunity to interact with with kids, or your, your grandchild or somewhere else. So I think, I think there is that that that new that little recommendation has some promise that one of the, the other thing that the thing that I was a little shy about is the notion that we can get by with a kind of uncoordinated adult programming I was looking at all souls church that, that we shared a service with a couple weeks ago. And they went from 200 people to 500 people and one of the ways they did it was through adult education they have like 22 adult education courses a year and, and, with about 300. Participants so it, that's not something to be jettisons. And basically turned over to each of the committee's without some kind of coordination and inspiration and planning because I think that that can be important for you know everybody's in a different stage of their cycle, but most of us like to think of ourselves into work and process and progress. So we should give people an opportunity to have some of that progress work at the church.



40:05

Okay, so it sounds like the values there are quality of adult programming as well as quality of children's programming and sort of pass it through it that it makes sense to new

people. That'd be accurate. Okay. And I think Sarah Milt I think I saw your hand a minute ago.



40:27

I just wanted to share. I'm gonna take my hand out, um, as a former middle school guidance counselor of six seventh, eighth graders, and I work in a middle school right now. There's a huge. They're there the maturity of sixth graders to eighth graders these huge, you get these little basically fifth graders who show up and then you've got these eighth graders who are practically ninth graders, a lot of the time. And it's, it's a real delicate thing I really liked the idea of having some kind of a youth group for these guys but we need to be really careful about the ages that we put together because, I mean, in most middle schools they specifically separate the different ages to keep the little guys safe and the big guys away from the little guys, because that those three years are for most of us, the probably the worst years of our childhood, have to be really careful with. If we're planning something we have to be so so careful how we plan that. Yeah, I like the idea, I just want to be really careful because it totally just not be done well.



41:43

Yeah. Great, thank you.



41:46

Um,



41:49

yes the last years of childhood. Okay, looking for Maryland, did you. Yes.



41:57

Um, so one thing that I guess puzzled me, is, is the timeline. So you had two years for an interim, and then two years, I forget, I don't have it in front of me. Now I could find it. And there was two years of another person that would kind of developed it and work the program and could apply for the final job and option, but it seemed like this was going to take a long time I get the interim because we got to put someone there right away to get this going that has experienced and so forth. Why is the timeline, so long.



42:33

Yeah, so thank you for asking that my understanding is that's an either or not a one and then the other. So, either you would have an interim who would say at the beginning of their time with you that they would not apply for the job, or you would have an acting or consulting person who could apply for the job. So, that's not a sequential that's a decision point. And either way there's a period of like development rethinking changing things up, responding to this report and other things. And then hopefully moving into a more sort of settled, long term thing. Okay, other points of resistance and what they what they tell us about our values. Yes, pretty. Yeah,



43:23

I would say it's funny, the volunteer thing also was the point of resistance for me. I was, I've been on the nominating committee for like six years or so and so, asking people to do things it's. Unfortunately feels like a bit of a loop, I know we've had more people come into the church recently so I think there could be a bigger pool that I'm not as familiar with. But that was a concern, and especially when we used to have volunteers teaching. It was mostly parents but there were a lot more parents, so it wasn't just a few parents are burdened with all of the responsibility. So I guess I'm just wondering how that would all unfold hopeful and I love that there are people who don't currently have kids at home or maybe not 10 kids who might be interested and eager and maybe we've been away from it long enough that there's a bit of a new kind of energy towards it, but that's that was probably the one piece that I felt most



44:37

concerned about.



44:39

And the same that represent the same values that we talked about with Ryan of like wanting to avoid burnout and making sure that people still get what they need.



44:51

Well, absolutely. I mean, I remember when I was volunteering. There was a part of me that wanted to go to the services. And so it was nice that we were able to split it up. I think it was like once a month that you've taught. And so, I think, organizing volunteers, is an art.

And I think having more education and, or training I should say training and support for the volunteers, particularly around the curriculum. I remember kind of getting this curriculum, and then I opened it up and it wanted me to go to the library and find music and like all this other stuff and I'm like. So I think, you know, making it manageable for the volunteers and supporting the volunteers throughout the year. And then recognizing the volunteers.



45:50

That's all super important. Thank you.




45:54


So I was on the Standing Committee when, when the pitch came to us from Ari and Rebecca, that we needed to move to pay teachers and the reason for it was burnout parents that wanted to be in the church. And then, frankly, parents are not good at it you know they just didn't like it weren't good at it wasn't gonna work. And there were people in the standing committee that their children had gone through when they were volunteers, it was parents and so forth. But again, in those days what was said was, it was, there was a lot of parents because there were a lot of kids. So, it wasn't such an ordeal but um so yeah we've been through this before, kind of going back and forth. I'm not sure what the answer is.





46:41


Yeah, um, let me just say, from the perspective of someone outside your congregation that a lot of congregations have gone through this cyclically. So, this isn't just you. Um, I don't know, sometimes that's comforting sometimes that's like well nobody has figured it out but, um, but I do think that you you're on to some of the right things which is making it a bigger not assuming that parents and our teachers are the same pool of people. Because some people don't want to do it and also you're going to need more people than that. And some of the stuff that fritzzy was talking about about training and recognition and all of that. And if this is the path you decide to go on there are resources from outside your congregation to sort of help figure some of that out. Of course, nobody has the like silver bullet but you're not alone in this and we can still get the region can help support some of that if that is where you end up putting together. So other areas of resistance or things you want to lift up that make you notice something about your values yes Judy Murray.


 47:55  
So,


 47:55  
I'm a numbers kind of gal. And


 47:59  
I can imagine building these fabulous programs in whatever structure you want with


 48:05  
volunteers with paid teachers, whatever. But if


 48:10  
this goes to eclairs earlier, if there are only a handful of kids. Then,

 48:18  
I just feel like it's, it's gonna fail.


 48:21  
And I don't know what to do about it.


 48:23  
So it becomes a recruitment problem and I don't know how you solve that


 48:26  
we've been trying to crack that nut for years now


 48:28  
so.

 48:30  
So, the value there is, I think, something about quality too like Claire was talking about about wanting wanting it to be a good experience for kids, because they have peers, is that what what the value is there.


 48:44  
I guess so, yeah,

 48:46  
or is there another value that's behind that for you.

 48:53  
I don't know, I don't know how to

 48:56  
boil it down so maybe something's up,

 49:00  
clear and then Lee.

 49:02  
I would say that a child in a small class is much less likely to speak up, unless there are other people around. Certainly, if there's only two people it's really challenging.

 49:15

Yeah. Great, thank you. Lee.



49:19

Yeah, I'm kind of trying to reflect what I'm hearing and actually what I think, which is. We acknowledge the problem and that we don't. We may have a shortage of adults who are willing to teach and, but also, we may have a shortage of children to actually attend the classes. And this goes from the reality that fewer people going to church now. So, you know, I would love to go back to the days when you could at least count on eight kids in the class. And as many people have said, I don't know how to solve the problem.



50:04

I'm Vicki Did you unmute because you wanted to speak.



50:09

I just wanted to say that I'm here to learn, I really have no prior thoughts about how the, the re effort has worked in the past, or how it might work in the future. I'm. I did have a bit of resistance to the number of ideas and hopes for the program that were expressed because I just, I felt that probably. It would be spread too thin. And I, I do have a concern about how we can most efficiently use the resources that we have in some productive program. Again, I have no answers and really no no knowledge but I'm very very appreciative of the earnest work that went into this effort and I think it's invigorating that we have an opportunity now to really envision it sort of from the ground up, because we aren't that committed to that many different ongoing



51:21

efforts. So,



51:23

yeah, thank you. Um, so I think one of the values there is wanting, not to sacrifice quality for quantity. It's not that accurate. Okay. Um, great, James.





51:39

So, I have heard discussion about, you know, parents volunteer hired teachers, you know that sort of this quantity quality piece. And, you know, the parent burnout. I taught our re for seven years when my kids were in the program and I understand that, well from the curriculum understanding what the curriculum is and doing that. But my, my question sort of raised out there is, do we have to do the same thing every Sunday, do we have to have the same or reprogram run the same classes with the same parents, every Sunday, could we consider some other model where we skip a Sunday, in some way to, you know, not do the same thing. Each week, But, break it up in some, some fashion so that's just, just an idea to put out there so that we could, you know, keep the, keep the quality up and hopefully minimize some of the burnout.



52:41

Yeah, thank you. Lee.



52:46

Yeah. This discussion has made me realize that there's something I absolutely don't know which is the size of the population the impression I get is that the youth group, always got a healthy number of people. I get the feeling that our whole lives has good attendance. How big are the classes of the, you know, K through six.



53:15

You know, that's a good question that I don't know the answer to either I'm wondering if Patti or maybe Ryan, do you know the answer to that.



53:27

I don't know this is Patty, I don't know the specific answer to that I know that attendance fluctuates. And so, you know, there, there could be some days when you know you have a few kids. Two kids in each class and so the tendency is to combine classes, which presents again, the age difference, that, you know, fitzy was Sarah was talking about too. But you know i don't know i mean we do have some staff on, and I don't know if I can call upon them to you know to offer sort of what the enrollment numbers are.



54:04

I'm happy to respond. This is Rebecca. I'm unstable. So that's why my avatars are not my face I apologize for that. And the answer is tiny. And that's been true for a number of years. We had sort of a bubble that went through third and fourth grade, so that was kind of a bubble but you know tops, like six kids in that cohort. The younger children, you know the pre, pre k and this would be for COVID. You know, theoretically, eight or nine children in that cohort. Realistically, two or three, and often only one. And for the fifth and sixth graders ditto, you know, theoretically, we had, I think, I don't have the stuff in front of me but I can certainly pick it up if you'd like. We had seven. In theory, like people who consider themselves affiliated, again, maybe two or three would show up. So, our whole lives. This year was a very small class and anybody who taught the classes you could can speak to that. So I think we ended up with, we had some attrition there were several people who dropped out so it ended up being quite small, we started at nine, I believe. And then, the eighth grade. Faith and Action Group. We had four people who expressed interest in that actually would have that probably would have worked, but the, the kids just didn't want to be in a group that small.



55:54

Thank you. Thank you. You're welcome. I'm sorry that I didn't realize you were there to answer that. But, great, thank you. Yeah. Great. Um, other things that people want to lift up here, Ryan.



56:13

I also, I was a little resistant to the, the way that the idea of using youth was sort of shut down regardless of the policy whether it were actually in violation of safe contributions policy. I just want to express that. I feel like one of the only things that has been working has been that in the past couple of years. So, I was a little nervous that that was sort of not a direction that was pushed at all. Just because I feel like, for instance, my children specifically I think have identified strongly with some of the teen helpers. And that was one of the only things that kept them interested in going to class was that there was role models who were younger and they sort of looked up to and enjoyed, and we're energetic. And so, I was a little bit nervous that one of the only things that I saw as being useful in the past several years was sort of like something we couldn't do anymore.



57:14

Thank you. Yeah. And I do think there is a great value and young to younger intergenerational connections so finding a way to keep that would be important. Yeah, thank you. fritzi



57:31

on that as well. I also thought it was a really nice opportunity to keep the teams connected. I think many of the ones who taught grew up in the ri program so it was kind of a nice give back because so often once they hit with CG their Sunday afternoon and evening and you never see them again, which I have to say, in the past few years, it's been great to have them participating in the services more and they are doing a wonderful job. So that's been a nice shift. So I think those are some things that have happened that have helped keep the teenagers involved, and visible, you know, they would sit in the church service so we see them. So often they get to their senior statement, and you'd be like who is that, you know, you don't recognize them anymore so it's been a nice way to do that so I also was wondering if there might be some way around, eliminating that completely and I'm guessing that for the teens, having it be a paid situation that's kind of an incentive so I don't know where that falls. Great,



58:37

thank you. Um, so I'm going to move us to our last question in just a couple of minutes but I first want to just lift up a couple of things. One is that these are questions as we've sort of discussed that, are some of the issues, or some of the challenges that your congregation is facing are challenges that a lot of congregations are facing because of changes and the world evolved sort of mentioned this that fewer people are going to church, sort of working age adults have less free time than in previous generations, which means that's one of the reasons why it's harder to get army volunteers than it was in previous periods in our sort of religious history. And then we have COVID which is you know played havoc with everything. So, the, the next iteration of re n, what really works, is emerging as somewhat really specific like what works in one congregation doesn't necessarily work in the neighboring congregation so like finding what works for you is the key. And the way to do that, which is lifted up in this report is experimentation, so there's going to need to be a little bit of a spirit of like trying things they don't work. We like go that didn't work and we try again, rather than oh man like nothing's ever gonna work, or that person did a bad job right so there's got to be a bit of like willingness to experiment and let things emerge that I invite you to search for the part of yourself that can get it, get on board with some experimentation. And then the other thing that I think is mentioned in the report as a possibility that I also just want to lift up from our perspective at the region is. If you have a,

we live in Massachusetts, which has more you your congregations like closer together than any other place in the country. And every congregation of about your size is having the same conversation about we don't have quite enough kids we don't have quite enough volunteers. We really need like double this number of kids to have critical mass and be sustainable. And you are close enough to your neighbors to actually do that. Definitely right now during COVID. Some congregations are doing this because you don't even have to like, it's not even any harder to go to the neighboring congregation right now, but even when we're out of COVID like, I think that's an avenue to explore to is like you, the report talks about this specifically about owl, like getting a cohort of owl might require reaching out to towns that don't have a congregation, but also to neighboring congregations, but it's just something to think about in general, I think, um, so I'm actually I'm gonna just have. I'm going to ask her last question in a minute but first, is there anything that's like you really want to say but it doesn't fit neatly into one of the questions that I've asked. I want to just sort of leave some room for some general. There's another thing that you didn't think to ask me, Phil. Yes.



1:01:46

Well, one of the things that was suggested. Is it is it a now is an understanding and analysis, an explanation of how time is actually spent by both our UI and youth coordinator in part so people are appreciate where we're where the time goes, but also so you have. So there's a chance to to alter how the time is spent because that's how your time has been should reflect somehow your, your priorities, but I think that's been for. I'm not sure the precise reason but I, I, it's not it's not easy unless you have a culture where people are used to keeping track of how they spend their time. It feels like an imposition to ask people to be more more clear about how they spend their time. But for those of us who've been in the world where every or every hour is accounted for dependent based on the work queue and you just that just isn't as natural as can be, you don't take it personally you just say that's. This is how structured work, allows people to understand what's going on what what how long it takes to do certain things. And a lot of things are pretty easy and get wonderfully appreciated. Some other things are very difficult and no one, you know pays you know, it's thankless so I think I think getting a culture here where we we keep a little better track of however we have all of our staff and maybe even some of our volunteers, where their time really went would be helpful.



1:03:26

Okay, thank you. Other sort of. Yes.



1:03:31

So appendix one has the other churches, and it has the size of the congregation the number of re enrollment and then the staff size. And I know what you were saying earlier is one size doesn't fit all but I'm on membership and what we've been doing is benchmarking with other churches, is to some of their approaches in engaging members and trying to get new visitors around and it's been helpful and we've tried some of those things. And when I look at this, I look at different numbers bigger number I mean isn't, isn't that worth doing benchmarking to see. You know what's working in different congregations and what would they recommend. So,



1:04:17

yeah, absolutely. I do not at all mean to suggest that you shouldn't be talking to other congregations, or. Absolutely. If somebody has a great idea like, go for it and I've. There have been, I have noticed a lot of times in congregations where like the neighboring congregation has a program that this congregation, never would have thought of and it works really well so yeah I don't mean to suggest don't do that, just to also just not assume that just because something works somewhere else it will automatically work here and vice versa. But yeah, by all means, talk to your neighbors. I think that is always helpful. Um. Cool. Other things people want to throw into this mix. Yes, Karen.



1:05:12

Yeah. Mine doesn't fit anywhere, but I just sit here just thinking of my concern of how inter dependent. Everything is because I was part of that group that. I mean, I taught archery for 15 years, and I mean a small group was eight to 10 kids. I mean I think my kids kind of went through one of the heydays of just, I mean, what's he do that. I remember neighbouring faith, when we would take kids to go see other characters, we'd have problems like trying to line up six seven cars to do that. So my I guess it's just an observation that this is just so important because what happened is that group was, was the group that ended up when John Russell ran the 2000 2001 that campaign and all it was that group of parents that kind of all went up in their pledges, and how then that kind of just all cement in a lot of our new programs and what I'm afraid now is that you can see it going in the opposite direction and it's just so important that they're so interconnected. like the money we have coming in and people, people were giving people went up so much in their pledges because all of a sudden they realized the as the youth programming was getting stronger and stronger, how important that was to them. So it's more just an observation of just how inter connected membership, our finances and our re is.



1:07:02

Yeah, thank you. Pretty.



1:07:10

Yeah, Karen I totally echo that and I think that's why it's so important that we engage as many people in the congregation and I feel like I'm curious as to what the difference is between parents of your, your heyday cohort Karen, and parents that are in town now I know Winchester has a high turnover people tend to come here when they have babies and, you know, come stay through 12th grade. At least, and I know, and I'd love to hear from some of the other parents who still got kids in school. You know, it seems like service work is really important. And, you know, racial justice is really important. You know organizing donations I mean you just look at the Winchester High School, weekly, bulletin, and all of the kind of service oriented stuff that's going on. I don't know if parents came to the church because they were also looking for some sort of spiritual nurturing, but I feel like, you know there are people in our community who could be drawn to our church but I'm not sure what it is that would make that appealing and I know time has become sort of the issue over scheduling and that's one of the things I hope COVID pandemic stuff may have given us a chance to reevaluate is kind of how much we schedule and how much we have to run around. So I'm just wondering, you know, what would, because I know some families that I think would be perfect matches for our church who kind of come through the doors, but didn't really stick or families that were here, that ended up leaving, and they would be that cohort like Karen was saying and I just not sure what we could do differently to reach out to those folks and serve that need both for the kids, but also for the parents. One thought I had was a summer vacation church school but not call it church school but just, you know, summer week you know kind of thing because parents are always looking for something to sign their kids up for. But anyway,



1:09:41

thank you.



1:09:43

Thank you. Any other thoughts on that Sarah.



1:09:53

I think it's pretty, I think most of us know and understand that, but I know we're, we're we've got low numbers all around but the fact that we've all we have sports constantly I mean maybe not right now, but once girls were given this equal rights to playing fields, the playing field space was, um, it was like sought after real estate and you could you had to like book and start using Sundays, to do sports because girls had equal rights just playing fields as boys did. So, some of the games all had to get moved to Sundays, and they made some rules somewhere that oh we never had a game until afternoon except if your games in like Salem New Hampshire, and it's at noon. You have to leave way ahead of time so they so we don't conflict with church time but it feels like the sports have really cut into that, like sacred, almost sacred slot that we've had for centuries, where we need to spend that day to just be what are our own selves and sports have been really kind of taken over. Anyway,



1:11:12

there's my thoughts.



1:11:13

Yes. Other activities too but yes, sports, for sure. Um, okay, I am going to ask you, our last question, which I'm going to have you answer in the chat, so you while people are answering this in the chat people can also keep talking about other things, but sorry I can't type and talk at the same time, there we go. Ah, knowing that a strong army 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 IRA program. So, while you're thinking about that and typing, if anyone wants to have any sort of wrapping up thoughts and then I'll, I'll close us out for the night.



1:12:10

Okay, so



1:12:11

then let me say, thank you so much for coming tonight. It's great to have so many of you. If you have other ideas that you didn't get to share, or that you think of after you leave, I often like leave a meeting and I'm like, Oh, no, I have the brilliant idea. So if your mind

works that way, you can email party ideas that spark after you leave or things you didn't get to say, or other things and there's her email in the chat. And just a reminder that this is a step in a longer process. The next step will be some decisions about the specifics of the job description for the army position, at least for the sort of interim slash acting period. And the next steps for that lie with the Standing Committee. So, yes, pretty



1:13:04

yeah I sent you an email this afternoon Eric I don't know if you saw it but yeah we were just wondering if there's any timeframe that's sort of universal in terms of going into search or if it's just when when whenever we get around to it.



1:13:17

Yeah, um, religious education searches, don't have the same like everybody does it on a very specific calendar that ministry searches do. But I think there are still sort of, well, people do still tend to transition. On the church year. So, um, but I am also fritzi going to spend asked my colleagues who have done more dairy searches support than I have, like, if they have specific recommendations for dates, and I'll let you know. But I do know that it's not as like specific a calendar, as, as regular search and



1:13:59

then also, like resources in terms of where people look I mean necessarily need to answer this i'm sure other people have that question that's already probably been thought about too



1:14:09

But yeah, there's, um, there's a couple of different. Yeah, I can tell you that offline. But yeah, we have some places to do that. Yes.



1:14:21

And I would just say if people know of somebody that they think would be a good candidate. Just let us know. Yeah. And if anybody's so moved to be on the search committee. Also please let us know. Oh,





1:14:41

yes.



1:14:44

Look, we have people saying there'll be teachers in the chat that is awesome. Thank you people. That is awesome. Great. Well, um, thank you all so much for your time tonight. Thank you for reading this report engaging with it and the dedication to the congregation and thank you so much the visioning team for this incredible work that you've done. Yeah.



1:15:10

Thank you, Erica for giving your time to us tonight too.



1:15:14

Yes, thank you, Erica.



1:15:16

Welcome.



1:15:21

Good night everybody.



1:15:42

I guess Patty's off now this is Aaron hi Erica, I was listening. Actually I took some notes so I didn't know I missed the beginning if people were wanting someone to take notes, or not.



1:15:56

Well I'm so glad that you did. We tried to record and discovered that we're not hosts so we couldn't wait. I have just saved the chat but actually if you could save it and put it in the same place that you have your notes.



1:16:09

Do you know how to the chat, I I did save the chat and let me just make sure it's in my Finder.



1:16:14

And then I also want to go over to otter capture the



1:16:21

transcripts.



1:16:22

I seem like I'm



1:16:27

ready to go.



1:16:35

Wait, this isn't here yet. The chat. Great. Okay, I can put that in the. Alright, great, thank you so much Erica that was wonderful.



1:16:59

You're welcome. Glad I can help.



1:17:02

Yeah.



1:17:05

All right, so I will touch base and I'll put that put the text, I'll put the chat in the shared

drive there so we have that great. Have a good night. Thanks again.



1:17:18

Bye. Bye.