

DLE Board Report – April 2018

Curriculum for Children and Youth:

- Family Ministry Update

I have been working to draft a letter inviting parents to participate in a conversation regarding the changes to our program that I have proposed following the Sunday Service on May 6th. (I have included a copy of this draft as the last page of this report.) I also introduced this idea in my April Beacon article.

- 10:30am: Programming & Education for Children and Youth Sundays in April

We're very excited to be continuing our "Environment Horcrux" in April! We will spend our time engaging in lessons and stories that promote environmental stewardship, as well as considering the ways in which we can get involved in our community in this regard. Some of the wonderful ways we will accomplish this will include working with the Landscape Committee on learning about native plants, invasive species, and planning our own Children's Garden.

- Suggested readings for families/parents this month:

This month we have a lovely poetry collection that coincides with our consideration of the Transcendentalists in Sunday Services this month. I will be using selections from this collection in Story Wisdoms.

Poetry for Kids: Walt Whitman Edited by Karen Karbiener, PhD *"A 2018 Notable Poetry Book for Children (National Council of Teachers of English) Introduce your children to the beautiful words of classic American poet, Walt Whitman. Poetry for Kids: Walt Whitman makes the work engaging and easy to understand...This collection of thirty-five of Walt's best works has been carefully curated for kids. Each piece of work is lovingly illustrated, and are both presented and explained by New York University professor Karen Karbenier, PhD, a primary authority Whitman's poetry.*

Walt Whitman includes enlightening commentary for each poem, definitions of key words, and a foreword by the expert so that kids, or even parents new to poems, will understand. Starting off with "I Hear America Singing," the collection includes excerpts from "Song of Myself," "O Captain! My Captain!" poems from Leaves of Grass, and many more thought-provoking, descriptive, and kid-friendly selections". <https://goo.gl/7Azsaj>

Volunteer/Training/Housekeeping Matters:

- **Volunteers:** As always, we could use more assistance staffing the various programs we offer.
- **Soup-er St. Paddy's:** This soup lunch gathering was greatly enjoyed by all, and there seemed to be a resounding sentiment that we should do lunches after services more often. We could not have pulled this off however without the generous donations of food and beverage from committees and Rabbi Chava, and most especially without the masterful kitchen supervision of Sandra McDonald.

Families & Other Child/Youth Programming:

- Friday Night Out will be on 4/13/2018. We currently have 8 children signed up and are fully staffed.

Adult Programming: *As mentioned in previous reports, adult programming is an important part of the Lifespan Experience Program of this congregation. In fact, our committee has had, and continues to have an Adult Programming Representative to help us connect with and serve this portion of our congregation. We are fortunate that John Hoffmann is in this role for the second year.*

Updates for this Month:

- Brewing Community: Brewing Community will gather from 5-7pm at The Workshop Brewing Company on 4/12/18 and 4/26/18.
- Wednesday Supper Schedule: Wednesday Supper is on its regular schedule – 1st/3rd Wednesdays are potluck, 2nd Wednesdays are \$5 (adult)/\$3 (children 10 & under), and 4th Wednesdays are pizza night with the cost of the meal (including salad, snacks, and dessert) to be shared by the participants.
- Wednesday Program: Although we had Liz Kirkwood from FLOW scheduled to give a talk on 4/4, we had to cancel again – this time due to snow! We will reschedule Liz’s presentation for a later date.
- Adult Lifespan Experience Connections: Rabbi Chava and I have launched the first “Branches” Adult Education class of 2018, and the group is reading Karen Armstrong’s “12 Steps to a Compassionate Life”. Thus far the conversation has been wonderful, and those who participate regularly (roughly 12-15) seem to really be engaging with the materials.

Staffing Matters:

My regular Sunday off in April was 4/1. I continue to participate in the “Future of Faith Formation” UU Institute class.

I have informed Rabbi Chava of my upcoming travel schedule for Northwestern Michigan College as a Study Abroad leader, and have brought my questions regarding PTO, leave, preparations, and time away to her attention.

Attendance:

March 2017 - Sundays	March 2018 - Sundays
03.05.17 – N=1, 8	03.04.18 – 4, N = 1
03.12.17 – N=2, 5	03.11.18 – 3, N = 2
03.19.17 – N=1, 7	03.18.18 – All Congregation Service, N=2
03.26.17 – N=2, 5	03.25.18 – 3, N = 2
March 2017 FNO	March 2018 FNO
03.10.17 – FNO = 8	02.09.18 – FNO = 7

Family Ministry Draft Letter/Email

Greetings UUCGT Families!

I wanted to take a moment to reach out to you in regards to my most recent Beacon article. In the article, I included a section titled: *"Family Ministry & the Future of Faith Formation"*, and I wanted to bring your attention to its contents.

It is important to me that I spend some of my time considering the latest conversations and educational materials relative to programming here at UUCGT. Part of this professional development has recently led me to take some online courses from the UU Leadership Institute. These courses, led by experts in the fields of UU ministry and faith formation have introduced some really interesting new approaches to the way we more holistically consider our work with all ages in our congregations. This includes all aspects of our congregational lives: Sunday Services, social programming, ministry and faith formation (commonly known as religious education - this term "faith formation" is the way that this kind of educational programming is being referred to in Unitarian Universalist Association circles). I have been in conversation with both the Lifespan Experience Committee as well as the Board regarding my suggestions for the future given the learning I have been doing, and I would like to have similar conversations with interested parents. Some of the innovations would include having all ages together in Sunday Services more often, offering more resources and materials for parents and families to engage in UU learning in their homes, and offering more UUA curriculum courses for adults.

As we look to this idea of Family Ministry as part of the Lifespan Experience, I welcome the input of parents and families in terms of what they need to feel supported in our community. There are several things that I would like for us to consider together: How can we best help you engage in faith formation as families, and what tools/resources might assist you in doing this? What services might we offer that would truly be helpful to you, rather than just one more thing to do? How can we support you as families and important members of the community?

I'd like to have a conversation together over a soup lunch following the Sunday Service on Sunday, May 6th. If you are able, I'd invite you to attend and share your thoughts on the questions above, as well as suggestions you might have for ways to more meaningfully include all ages in Sunday Services on a more frequent basis. Childcare will be provided for the lunch, although I would love to hear how children would like to be more involved in Sunday Services (what do they want to do? What are they interested in?), and what activities and kinds of events might they like to see included in their UUCGT community. I'd also invite you to read the following in advance of our conversation: "The Death of Sunday School & the Future of Faith Formation" By Kim Sweeney <https://goo.gl/vFXYod>, as well as my special report on this subject which I included along with my regular UUCGT Board included in February 2018 <https://goo.gl/bYuhcB>. If you are able to attend this lunch/conversation, please RSVP to me by **Sunday, April 22nd**, so we can make arrangements for childcare and the right amount of food.

These are exciting times! I look forward to hearing your suggestions as we move forward in new and wonderful ways.

In Peace - Sarah