

UUCSC
Annual Report 2006-2007
For the Religious Education Program
Submitted by the Director of Religious Education

It is with deep gratitude and a joyful spirit that I thank this abundant congregation for the honor of serving you. Hear it is, my fourth year serving as the Director of Religious Education! I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the many wonderful people who lent their time, talents, supplies, and dedication to our cooperative program.

The RE Committee consisted of Cindy West, Pam Santos, John Glasheen and Deb Hedison. Carol Craig served as our board liaison. Special thanks to Sue Kerkian who served on the committee for a short, but valuable time and to Tricia Armstrong who continues to give talent, insight, wisdom and support to the RE committee on a constant basis.

Once again the school year was divided into three sessions each requiring 8-9 weeks of volunteers to teach the K -7th graders. The children were divided into 2 classes (K-4th and 5th-7th grade). Our first session focused on our year's topic of UU identity. The curriculums used were "We Believe" and "Spirit of Adventure".

The second session was taught by members of the Social Action Committee. They shared experiences from their travels to various regions in Africa. There were many examples of how we, as Unitarian Universalist Americans compare and contrast to our African sisters and brothers. The lessons were full of thoughtful sharing, storytelling, creative exploration and hands-on activities.

Our last session explored UU Identity with a community –building twist. We are revisiting our 1st & 7th Principles and will look at how they relate to our spiritual practices as humans at home, at school, and at church.

The curriculums used were "Spirit of Adventure", "We Believe" and the cooperative game manual "Deep Fun".

This year the RE Committee formed a Jr. Youth Group which was open to youth in grades 5th – 7th. The Jr. Youth Group Committee was headed up by Cindy West. Goals for the group were to establish monthly trips, projects and gatherings to promote community building and cohesiveness among the participating youth. The group enjoyed a campfire, creating a beautiful wooden bookshelf with Lou Rubenstein, an evening of cooperative games, a visit to the Hurdis' home where they star gazes using Dave's telescope, and a musical "jam session" at the Santos home.

The Senior Youth Group was lead by advisors Sally Barney, Cindy Berry, Jeff Berry and, joining this year, Charlie Donnelly. The group included 8th graders this year as well as high school age youth. Meetings moved from twice a month to every Sunday in January. The youth led a powerful and moving service in March as well as giving input about holidays at the Adult Christmas service. They enjoyed 2 retreats this year; the first to Cedar Hill in Duxbury Ma. and the second to North Conway to enjoy time at a ski resort. Besides fun activities the youth lent their time and talents to the following social action projects: work as runners and childcare providers at the annual auction, painting of chairs to be auctioned off, helping the DRE carry out the Easter canned goods hunt, and making soup for the Welcome House

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Once a month the DRE led the children's service and provided a social action project. Projects included collecting canned goods for Welcome House, warm clothes drive, outreach mailings and gifts for infirmed congregants and friends who have moved, creating many notes, sewing fleece hats for cancer survivors, earning money for cancer research, creating a beautiful chalice banner together, creating a time capsule, helping at the annual auction, pictures and friendship bracelets for our friends in Africa, creating a prayer shawl, enjoying a morning of meditating in our pajamas, and planting and cleaning up our church grounds. Personally I created 3 classroom felt board stories; some which were shared with the congregation during Conversation with the Children.

Much work went into finishing the first part of the Safe Congregation policy with a focus on Religious Education. The policy includes background checks for volunteers, fire drill procedures, fireproofing fabric banners and altar cloths, first aid procedure and materials, name tags with allergies listed on back for children in the nursery, smoke detectors with carbon monoxide detectors included, and a clear outline of Rhode Island criminal background check policies.

Other Policies created this year are the "Guidelines for a Peaceful Church Community" and an updated version of the UUCSC Religious Education Philosophy.

Our program expanded to include adult programming. Approximately 15 folks participated in "Spiritual Parenting" which was co-facilitated by Rev. Betty Kornitzer and myself. The program focused on exploring ways to bring spirituality into our homes. The six session curriculum spanned from November 2006 to April 2007.

This year we purchased several new curriculums including "Spiritual Parenting", Spirit Play", and new Youth Advisor handbooks. Many UUA pamphlets about Religious Education were purchased to be made available to visitors and new families. We also purchased a Polaroid camera and many new books for the RE Library.

In terms of advertisement, the RE Brochure was updated describing our 2006-2007 program. We have also continued a monthly newsletter submission, family newsletters and postcards and a monthly submission to the webpage.

Organizing the RE library continues. A second bookshelf was donated to RE. Our goal is to create a lending library in which parents, teachers and children can fully enjoy and utilize these resources. We also are working to create a list of all our books and curriculums which will be made available to everyone in the congregation.

Professionally, I took two courses to further my religious education. The first training was "Spirit Play" which is a Montessori based curriculum for teaching Sunday school. I also completed a Renaissance Module (modules which train religious professionals in specific areas). This module focused on Youth. This is my second completed module.

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I have become a member of LREDA (The Liberal Religious Educators Association) which promotes religious growth and learning for continuing education, sharing resources, advocating for professional recognition, and providing encouragement and support for religious educators. My entrance fee was paid for by the district BCD DRE Gathering to which I belong.

I also attended monthly district meetings and served on the BCD Executive committee as Secretary. I also served on the Peace Festival Committee and was the Registrar for the Renaissance Module.

The year ends with 5 children dedicated and 7 youth being bridged.
Sunday school attendance averaged 16 children.

We have been blessed this year and there is much to look forward to.

Respectfully submitted by:
Deborah M. Hedison
Director of Religious Education
May 10, 2007