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SAMPLE

Table of Contents

ADMINISTRATION AND VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT	3
HUMAN AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT	16
RIGHT RELATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS.....	25
SEXUAL HEALTH.....	33
SIX SOURCES OF UU INSPIRATION.....	40
SYSTEMS AND CONFLICT.....	49
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FOUNDATIONS	56
WORSHIP.....	63
SOCIAL JUSTICE THEORY AND PRACTICE	71

SAMPLE

ADMINISTRATION AND VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Summary

In any organism, structures and processes that support life are essential to survival. Religious Education in a congregation is no different! Without backbone and organizational systems, besides just amazing guts (!), the very life of an RE program will atrophy. On a macro level, the creation of clearly defined missional outcomes, roles with specific functions, spaces which promote efficacy, guidelines for safety, networks of communication, and consciously chosen methodology, all serve to sustain health and ongoing growth of a program. On a micro level, developing curricular plans, advanced calendar planning, procedures for data management, staff and volunteer training and oversight, and sound fiscal planning, also provide vital power in a program's life. Not to be overlooked are the sometimes invisible-to-the-newcomer's-eye "magic DNA" strands that make a program feel dynamic and vibrant. For me, these include relational vibes from staff with deep investment in mission and a personal call, regulation of tweaks in the system according to what is going on in the real lives of families and the culture, and engagement with the character of a congregation and its deepest historical expression of Unitarian Universalism.

Formation

Structured learning experiences

- ~Mindfulness in Education: Teacher Training, 2015 (6 hr.)
- ~Fiscal Responsibility in a Consumerist Culture, First Unitarian Church, Rochester, 2013 (2 hr.)
- ~UUA Large Conference: Governance and Ministry in Large Congregations, 2011 (3 days)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway: Effective to Transformative Leadership, 2010 (10 hr.)
- ~RE In-gatherings, 2002-2006, Fall Cluster Cons on RE planning and Administration (8 hr.)
- ~LREDA Fall Con: Models of Religious Education, 2004
- ~Teacher Training Renaissance Module, 2002

Life experiences

- ~Curriculum tagging for themes in Tapestry of Faith
- ~Serving as LREDA Seaway Chair and Vice Chair
- ~Planning conference workshops and retreats for LREDA and UUA
- ~Serving on Lay Leader Development Team, SLD
- ~Fiscal management, home ownership, raising three teens as a single full-time parent
- ~Planning retreats for Catholic Engaged Encounter and Unity Matters
- ~Serving on the Parent-Teacher-Administration body at Morrisville-Eaton Central Schools
- ~Athletic event planning, registration, and participation
- ~Growing up in a family of fourteen with parental modeling of organization and cooperation

Application and Integration

Example 1: A Revised 2015-2016 Budget

Given that we serve over 260 children and already had limited staff hours, this current budget reflects the difficult work of reducing the Religious Education line by nearly \$17,000. I had to shift resources to cover anticipated increases in hours for some staff based on cuts of other positions, while not compromising on areas that would directly support family membership integration and retention. At the annual congregational meeting and through Board communication, I ensured an open conversation about what the cuts were and how they would affect program offerings and staffing.

The process increased my consciousness of the risk of staff burn out and the need for continuing advocacy to maintain adequate staffing levels. For the first time, I'm considering sources of support through grant writing. The process has also spurred a desire in me to explore issues of inclusion and fair pay as they relate to our internal fiscal priorities.

SAMPLE

Staff	Total hour	Week	Dates or special notes	Hourly	Pay	
DRE	30				55,000	
RE Admin	12	40	8/10/2015-5/08/2016	12.5	6,000	
	18	9	8/10/2015- 10/18/2015	12.5	2,025	
Summer RE Admin support	7	7	summer	12.5	613	
Mindfulness Educator	3	9	monthly Sept-May	30	810	
EARLY CHILDHOOD						
Early Childhood Director	5.5	35	9/12/2015- 5/15/2016	12.5	2,407	
	1.5	16	7/5/2015- 9/6/2015; 5/22/2016-6/26/2016	12.5	300	
3/4teacher	4	35	9/12/2015- 5/15/2016	11	1,540	
Summer Elementary Lead Teacher	2	16	7/5/2015- 9/6/2015; 5/22/2016-6/26/2016	11	352	
3 teacher/workshop leader	6	35	9/12/2015- 5/15/2016	10.5	2,205	
Summer 3/4 lead provider	2	16	7/5/2015- 9/6/2015; 5/22/2016-6/26/2016	10	320	
JUNIOR YOUTH						
Director of Junior Youth Ministry	8	22	8/17- 12/6/2015; 3/7 -	17	2,992	
YOUTH						
COA Coordinator	5	40	8/17/15-5/22/2016; 1 wk	17	3,400	
Director of Youth Ministry	10	44	8/17-6/19/2016; 2 wks	17	7,500	
FRIENDS IN FAITH						
2 Friends in Faith		9	monthly	20	360	
SUMMER						
Summer Childcare	1.5	11	7/5/2015- 9/6/2015; 6/26/2016	9	149	
Summer Elementary	1.5	16	7/5/2015- 9/6/2015; 5/22/2016-6/26/2016	9	216	
Congregational Meeting Childcare	2.5	2	2 providers	9	90	
Supply and Expense					2,692	
				total	88,971	

Deleted:						
COA assistant						1,200
2 Youth Advisor Specialists						2,400
Childcare for Starting Point, RE Summit						204
Workshop Leader (Drama)						500
OWL coverage from Jr High Director						1,090
Jr High Director hours reduction (12						2,450
Integrative Mindfulness Ed						600
OWL teacher						260
Guest speakers						250
Supply and expense						2,692
Jr High Drama Group						280
Sat night K-5						0
Sat night 3/4 teacher						680
					total	12,606
<u>Already deleting in 2014 to save:</u>						
RE Assistant						2,500
Youth Group Assistant						1,000
Friends in Faith all but 2						360
Friends in Faith training						100
					Total	3,960

Example 2: Religious Education Church Calendar

By far the most complex part of my job, this calendar (Workshop Adventure tab shown below) is a yearly planning mechanism to manage all five sub-programs we operate as part of Religious Education, and Our Whole Lives (OWL). Included are basic dates for when the programs are in session, curricular content, and volunteer position terms. Also, important reminders for wider church themes and events, parenting groups, introductory sessions, and many other additional elements are noted for potential synergy or conflict!

When reviewing and reflecting on the extent of this tool, I recognize that it expresses the variety of changes I have implemented over the years, most notably, instituting diverse volunteer commitment schedules and the vast restructuring of OWL. Besides that, the format serves as an efficient way to make new additions as well as easily manage changes year to year. My Administrative Assistant at first was challenged by my “code language,” but since has been eternally grateful to be able to independently look up any details about what is happening when.

SAMPLE

6-Sep		PREK	WRK	TRAVS	OWL 5 th	Stories
INVITATION						
13-Sep	OPENING	f1				
20-Sep		f2	ALL COMM	t1		The Lost Son
27-Sep	Parenting	f3	F1	t2		Supriya's Bowl
LETTING GO						
4-Oct	NEW to RE	f4	F2	t3		Silver Cat
11-Oct		f5	F3	t4		Old Joe
18-Oct	Parenting	f6	F4	t5		Unforgivin g Servant
25-Oct	LREDA CON	f7	F5	t6		Skits
ANCESTRY						
1-Nov	Memory Tree	f8	LF1	t7		Grandmtr Cloth
8-Nov	GG voting / UUFF	f9	LF2	t8		Olympia Brown Crow and
15-Nov	Parenting	f10	LF 3	t9		
22-Nov	NEW to RE/Williams	w1	LF 4	t10		Irish Cloak
29-Nov	10am only	STAFF	STAFF	STAFF		
EXPECTATION						
6-Dec		w2	LF5	t1		The Horse Ran Off
13-Dec		w3	GG	GG		
Sat Dec 19	Parentin g	STAFF	Sol 5/8pm	off		
27-Dec	10am only	STAFF	Off ccare	Child care		
RESISTANCE						
3-Jan	OWL intro	w4	W1	t2		Tipingee
10-Jan		w5	W2	t3		Treasure in Field
17-Jan	Parenting	w6	W3	t4		Seeger and
24-Jan	baby brunch	w7	W4	t5		Black Bull
31-Jan	New to RE/	w8	W5	t6	paren t	Siddhartha

DESIRE						
7-Feb		w9	LW1	t7	parent / child	Narcissus
14-Feb	TECH FREE / WILLIAMS	STAFF	special	t8		Judge
21-Feb	Parenting	w10	LW2	t9	1	Labai Malang
28-Feb	UU FF	s1	LW3	t10	2	Maple Syrup
LIBERATION						
6-Mar	NEW to RE	s2	LW4	t1	3	Jumping Mouse
13-Mar	CON	s3	S1	t2	4	Moses
20-Mar	Parenting	s4	S2	t3	5	Family of Acrobats
27-Mar	BREAK EASTER	STAFF	easter	STAFF	Off	Stoning of woman
CREATION						
3-Apr	DA	s5	film fest?	t4	6	Blind People
10-Apr		s6	S3	t5	7 with parent	Potter's Wish
17-Apr	Parenting/CON	s7	special earth	t6	8	Garden of Poor

24-Apr		s8	S4	t7	9 assertive	Seneca Creation
BLESSING						
1-May	New to RE	s9	S5	t8		Sower
8-May		s10	special	t9	Mother's Day	Cracked Pot
15-May	WILLIAMS	STAFF	Grads	t10		The Lost Coin
22-May		STAFF	Drama			
29-May	Memorial Day	STAFF	Peace	10am		
SIMPLICITY						
5-Jun		COA	Annual Mtg	10am		
12-Jun		MUSIC	Music			
19-Jun	Parenting	END O YEAR	Intergen			

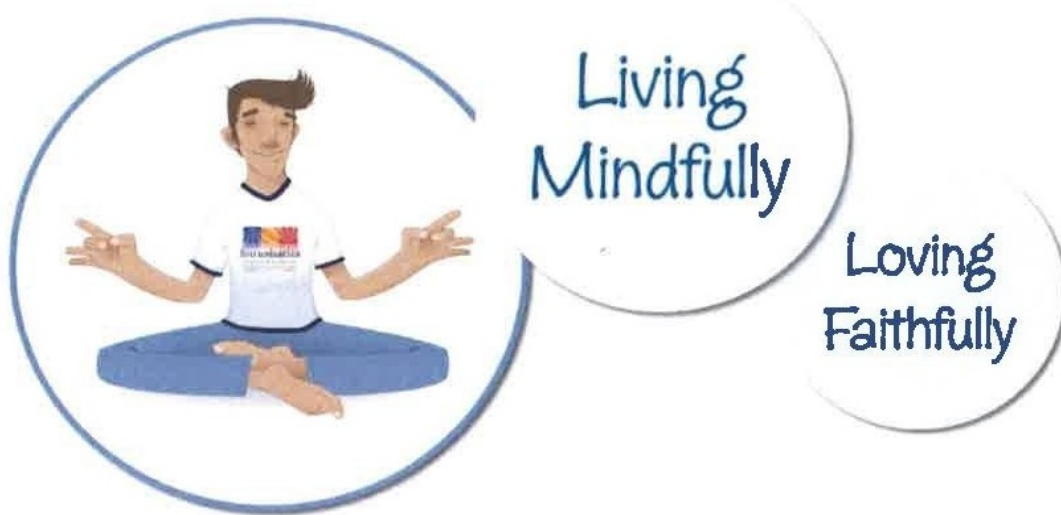
Example 3: Program Newsletter

The template for this newsletter produced in Constant Contact, was a collaborative effort with a parent, Melissa Boyack, who is a graphic artist by profession. She and I discussed moving away from a more industrial-looking communication to one with a softer feel and easy access to information. On a weekly basis, each program director works on her newsletter which I edit and send to every parent in each program. The administrative time for me is greater with multiple newsletters, but the strategy has paid off in establishing more engagement with parents directly in terms of program content and relationship with program director.

Content categories for all our newsletters are nearly the same and grounded in church mission (Listen, Open, Serve) and Religious Education mission (Live Mindfully, Love Faithfully). After two years of running our Parenting as Spiritual Practices group, and integrating mindfulness across all ages, I've added a monthly mindfulness practice which is written up by our Mindfulness Educator. The tool helps me to evaluate whether what we are doing meets the mark of our mission and allows me to evaluate the language of my staff in how they articulate their program aims. For parents in a large church setting this communication gives them a sense of intimate contact, a starting point for conversations, opportunities for deeper engagement, and if they have missed a week, gives them an understanding of what they missed.

First Unitarian Religious Ed

September Worship Theme: **Invitation**



Coming Up in Workshop Adventure on **September 27**

Inviting Others to Share

This Sunday we invite children to...

Listen: to their own capacity for generosity and compassion.

Open: to the gift of abundance.

Serve: Serve our UU Schools Backpack Program by bringing in change.

Supriya's Bowl is a Buddhist story about a young girl's invitation to her community to come together for those who suffer.

Workshops on UU Sources of Wisdom

Fall Rotation:

Guru Gym- Islam and giving way to something bigger than self

My Sacred Stage- Inviting in and letting go of gifts

Thinking Cap Lab- Consensus vs. majority rule in democracy

Good Neighborhood- Jesus on not judging others

Superhero City- Honduras educational exchange on tangrams

Nature Center- Cycle of changes in relationships

After Church Adventure

Inviting Sharing

Ask your family members to contribute to a collective meal you share with someone in need.

Mindfulness Skill of the Month

Inviting Connection

Take a few moments to scan the contact with the floor and seat, and open up to the support that is there for you. Emphasize this connection with support in your felt sense, letting gravity take your weight as you take a pause from current concerns and preoccupations. Let go into this connection with the earth.

UU Families in Action

BackPacking!

Our church's BackPack Program at Foodlink provides weekend food to School 22 students who are at risk of not having enough nutritious food to eat Friday-Monday. Minimum age is 8. Email your full name and the date(s) you can commit to chris.farnum@gmail.com

- 6-8 pm Thurs, Oct. 29
- 9am-noon Sat, Nov. 14
- 6-8 pm Thurs, Dec. 3

Honor Native American History and Culture

Sunday, October 11th at 1 pm- all ages welcome!

We will be visiting the Ganondagan (ga·NON·da·gan) Bark Longhouse and taking a walk. \$4.00 per school age child and Seniors, \$5.00 per adult, preschool siblings are free. Reservations <http://goo.gl/forms/sMVHPwfybx>.
??? Contact Veronica Howard at socialjustice@rochesterunitarian.org

Clothing drive coming!

We've been asked to help supply clothes, shoes, and boots for children in need in K-2 at School 22. Size smalls needed!

Parenting as Spiritual Practice

Sept 27 at 9:30am on Invitation

The need to enrich the lives of others, and to see and be seen, are two of the strongest universal needs. Turning our attention to these through mindfulness, we invite growth in our sense of worth and dignity.

Fall Congregational Meeting

Sept 27 at 1-3pm

Please email SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org before Friday if you need childcare for this year's annual social justice meeting.



firstunitarian
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SAM

Example 4: Space Update

This worship space update has been an administrative undertaking for over two years, and is nearly complete. An artist in the congregation, Kindle Perry, and I did some visioning about a room that would be way more kid-friendly than cement block! The panels and waterfall had to be planned to be completely mobile and unattached to the walls. We also mapped out how the tree screens would have embedded symbols for the seven UU Principles. I earmarked money for materials from prior years' budgets, and helped organize work parties. A growing interest in the space for use by adult meditation groups has brought in additional funding to help complete the project.

The more work I have done to enhance the spaces we have, the more convinced I am that an individual's felt sense of space really matters in Religious Education. The best curriculum can't work in a space whose message and meaning works against it. Also, spaces call forth certain responses in us as staff, which helps us be in our bodies and work with a certain sensitivity and hope. In this way, the nitty gritty planning of money, material, and volunteer help supports the wider RE ministry aims.



Lenses

Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism (ARAOMC)

Besides structurally including a Superhero City workshop each year on current areas of oppression children deal with (this year on Black Lives Matter and skin color), I have actively tried to hire a diverse staff. As Seaway Chapter Vice-Chair last year, I helped arrange an in-service training with our District staff on Building Authentic Diversity. Currently, our Religious Education budget funds a one-on-one mentor program for children with special needs (Friends in Faith), and I have developed a collaborative vision with key families, for an alternative inclusive workshop room in the future.

Technology

Shifting to use Constant Contact has enhanced the reach and efficacy of our communication with parents. One of my Ministry Outcomes for this year is to include a newsletter article written from one of our Religious Education program directors on mission-based wins. Besides using direct email for communications about volunteer schedules, I have also employed the use of Facebook for quick and effective administrative tasks such as sending a needed form to a parent, checking the registration for an upcoming Youth Conference, or seeing if anyone from the community signed up for an upcoming Parenting As Spiritual Practice Introduction. I have grown more comfortable posting job openings to a variety of employment sites, and have worked tirelessly with my Administrative Assistant to make our online registration process as easy as possible!

HUMAN AND FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Summary

Education on many levels (spiritual, psychological, physical, intellectual, emotional) happens in the context of a developmental phase which has specific characteristics and represents particular needs. The better we can understand and meet those needs, the more effective we can be in offering children and youth the kind of liberation we hope for in a liberal religious education program. One is not set free or deeply bound to a faith tradition in a vacuum. Whether a child is developing trust vs. mistrust of the world, whether they are expanding peer networks and independent critical thinking, these are essential to understand in the creation of an environment, curricula, and worship experience that engages their readiness for growth. Especially in a tradition that highly values the ongoing revelation of truth and discovery, the programs we organize at their core, must express this ongoing unfolding that is inherent in the nature of human beings and its particular expression of people in their culture. To honor each stage and phase, in the largest sense, is to celebrate the worth and dignity of all people across the life span as learners.

Formation

Structured learning experiences

- ~Graduate Course: The Developing Mind
- ~Undergraduate Courses: Developmental Psychology, Child & Adolescent Psychology, Adult Development
- ~Creating Beloved Community for All Children, 2011 (1-day seminar)
- ~Dream of the Good, 2010 (2-day retreat on adapting spiritual practices for pre K- high school)
- ~LREDA Fall Con: Models of Religious Education, 2004
- ~UUA General Assembly, Intergenerational Worship (Self-lead workshop) Boston, 2003
- ~Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education for Grades 7-9 and 10-12, Adults, 2002
- ~Renaissance Module: Ministry with Youth, 2002
- ~Renaissance Module: Philosophy, 1998

Life experiences

- ~Parenting three children and having a large intergenerational network of relatives
- ~Curriculum Writing: Spiritual Survivor, Workshop Adventure, Parenting as a Spiritual Practice, Unity Matters, Beyond This House, BeaconQuest, UniQuest
- ~Working on Soulful Sundown team at May Memorial UU Society
- ~Hosting Young Adult retreat weekend at Unirondack
- ~Working professionally in mental health settings serving various ages of children and youth
- ~Student interning in an adult state psychiatric hospital and elder care health center
- ~Living-in as a nanny for a newborn and 4 yr. old

- ~Working as a Magic School Bus Director providing enrichment to inner city day care homes
- ~Lead teaching for toddlers at YMCA
- ~Being a Unit Leader at a summer Girl Scout camp for 8-10 yr. olds
- ~Adopting-a-Grandparent in college
- ~Providing home schooling and running Home Church

Notable reading

The Developing Mind, by Daniel Siegel

Children's Social Consciousness and the Development of Social Responsibility, by Sheldon Berman

Independent study

Identity Development in Intermodal Expressive Arts Therapy, Master's thesis
The Waking of Heroic Individuals, Bachelor's thesis

Application and Integration

New Year's Baby Brunch

Instituted in January of 2014, this event celebrates babies born to congregants in the prior year. After worship, families share a sit down brunch prepared by volunteers. A few loving gregarious grandparents come to support our new parents by holding babes in arms when needed. Reverend Tina gives a blessing and I share an overview of our Early Childhood Program and about how to get involved in our Parenting as Spiritual Practice group. We present parents with a onesie with their child's name on it and a chalice, a pair of superhero booties (we know every child is an amazing human!), a UU book of simple verses for bedtimes, and a baby UU teddy bear.

The event has elicited great appreciation from parents and extended family members. The chance to relax, talk about their experiences as new parents/siblings/grandparents, and connect without much agenda, seems quite enough. I learned to trust my gut on this expenditure of time and resources, and address some of my need to help young parents feel welcome and special in the community. I hope someday to do more intensive attachment work using mindfulness practice and non-violent communication with new parents, and parents to be.

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step....



Let's celebrate the UU journey together!!

Please join us for a First Unitarian New Year's Baby Brunch! All new 2015 babes (or nearly then!), siblings, parents (you!), grandmas and grandpas are invited to come gather for a simple meal after the 9:30 service in Williams Gallery on January 24th. Enjoy time to relax, eat, meet, and celebrate life's gifts!

Please RSVP to Sheila at SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org by 1/20 with who will be attending. Hope to see you!

Workshop Adventure Sample: Thinking Cap Lab

This sample follows the same framework I use to write all the K-5 workshops: A fun physical opening, a time for joys and sorrows, a time for reflection on the worship story from earlier and the monthly theme, and the experiential learning activity. The Thinking Cap Lab focuses on "Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit," so the workshop outline always includes a direct reference to the Humanist Manifesto III. The "Driftwood" activity comes from my Peace Circle Training.

I would have included here the more simplified version of the differences and similarities of consensus and majority vote, but did post those in the room for reference. Children of any age can participate in the exercises and learn at various levels of understanding. For a Kindergartener, the Driftwood activity may represent a chance to have a lot of power in the circle! For a 5th grader, the exercise provides a chance for reflection on peer pressure, judgment, and willingness to cooperate with others.

WORKSHOP ADVENTURE

Thinking Cap Lab

Fall: 2015-2016

INTRODUCTIONS AND WARM UP FUN: Brief fun activity to get to know your group members a little...

Let's decide to do something that will loosen up our bodies—what do you suggest? Here are the three choices: Group Yoga, jumping jacks, I am Alive Awake Aware Enthusiastic

Raise your hand for your top choice. Narrow to 2 choices, revote. Do the activity chosen.

LISTENING CIRCLE: This is our listening chalice. We take two big breaths together to make a quiet circle.

We listen to each person say one thing from their listening inside, and do not interrupt or comment. It can be a celebration or mourning from your week, or just how you are feeling inside right now. Pass chalice around again, inviting anyone who did not share at first to do so. Close the circle by giving voice to what was shared.

DEEPER LISTENING TO THE STORY FROM WORSHIP EARLIER:

Review the story very briefly and which wisdom Source it comes from. Ask the children to listen more deeply: What was the most important part of the story for you? Where are you in the story- did you recognize yourself? What part of this is about < INVITATION or LETTING GO>?

INTRO AND HUMANIST MANIFESTO III:

This room is called the Thinking Cap Lab because as UUs we value our ability to use our reason—our thinking and creativity-- in our living and loving. People who call themselves HUMANISTS don't believe in any kind of GOD who will make the world or our lives better. For them, it is basically up to us to become the people we want to be and to create the world we want.

Humanists believe in the power of people using the democratic process to solve problems- especially respecting different but caring views, and make sure that all people can have well-being.

(Adult version HUMANIST MANIFESTO III) Humanists are concerned for the well being of all, are committed to diversity, and respect those of differing yet humane views. We work to uphold the equal enjoyment of human rights and civil liberties in an open, secular society and maintain it is a civic duty to participate in the democratic process...

GOING DEEPER THROUGH ACTIVITY:

Explain to the children that today they are invited to be part of the following activity to explore the wisdom of the story for them more in the Thinking Cap Lab:

Today we are going to do an exercise in how people can make decisions together.

Driftwood Activity:

This is a non-verbal activity. The only rules are that the driftwood sticks have to stay in the circle and need to be used safely. Use a separate talking piece. Explain that.

You are going to start by arranging the sticks in the circle and then you will pass the talking piece to the next person. Explain that everyone has the opportunity to build something or if they are satisfied with what has already been done, they can just pass the talking piece on to the next person. The activity does not end until the talking piece has gone all around the circle without anyone changing anything. As the keeper, you may want to make sure that the group doesn't come to consensus too quickly, by getting up yourself several times to change the design. When the activity ends, pass the talking piece and ask everyone what they thought of the activity and what they thought its purpose was. Remember to go last because you are asking for opinion. In summarizing afterwards don't be afraid to point out if some participants seemed frustrated etc. It is always good to emphasize that the activity is not over just because you feel it should be. It is all about giving people voice and the opportunity to say what they need to, even non-verbally.

Process: review what is required for people to make decisions together. This model is called consensus building. What we did earlier was voting by majority. What differences and benefits do you see in each way of coming to an agreement as a group? Especially about INVITING input or LETTING GO of **your** way of doing it!

- Consensus requires participation from all group members, including those with minority opinions. Majority rule does not require a collective agreement.
- Consensus enables all group members to be invested in the chosen outcome. Majority rule may result in those in the minority feeling left out of the decision-making process.
- Consensus requires an environment that is conducive to healthy discourse. Majority rule does not require the same level of interaction, and may allow members to keep their beliefs private, if they so choose.
- Majority rule is a quicker decision-making process.

- Majority rule is susceptible to abuse by the majority, while groups seeking to reach a consensus may fall victim to groupthink.

RECAP:

Back to centering circle for brief sharing. One minute- to review what you did in workshop.

CHECK OUT: What are you grateful for from this workshop that you can take with you as you *Listen, Open, Serve Every day* this week?

UU Spiritual Survivor Curriculum

I wrote this curriculum to provide junior high youth with a relevant and engaging mix of experiences to help them navigate early adolescence as Unitarian Universalists. Based on the concept of the reality show “Survivor,” the curriculum includes primary “Challenges” that junior high youth commonly face. Our Whole Lives provides the basis each winter for facing the challenge of developing healthy sexuality and relationships in modern times. Each Challenge has two essential components: In-house sessions for skills-building, two offsite trips to places of worship in which youth will learn something about how the particular religious group faces the Challenge, two social action projects which help youth apprentice with our Social Justice Task Forces, and a fun social event.

The success of Spiritual Survivor has been expressed in our high retention rates into Coming of Age and eventually, Youth Group. I’m continuing to tweak the program in its second rotation of the three year material, including more non-violent communication skills, expanding the range of social action activities, and enhancing OWL experiences with online resources. One of this year’s RE Ministry Outcomes is to add a “group text” feature that allows the director to send an encouraging message about the Challenge each week.

YEAR 1

The Mega Mall Challenge: Participants will take the challenge of resisting cultural temptations to over-consume and learn to listen more deeply to inner values and needs greater than one’s own. One’s relationship with money will be explored in terms of decision-making, product education, one’s attitude of gratitude, and lifestyle choices. Excursions include a trip to the mall, Mennonite Fellowship, and monastery, and social justice includes Micro-Finance Task Force, and Honduras project.

The Loner Challenge: Participants will explore the largest challenge facing adolescents: isolation. Groups will explore the difference between solitude and loneliness, as well as networking skills, identifying peer isolation, and reaching out to people in other age demographics or religions. Excursions include a trip to the Islamic Center and Hindu Temple, and social justice apprenticeships include RAIHN, and Valley Manor.

YEAR 2

The Rollercoaster Challenge: Participants will take the challenge of moving through life's ups and downs with direction from inner listening and UU values. One's ability to assess the severity of situations, level of control, communication of needs, and personal strength are supported. Excursions include a trip to the Zen Center and Temple Beth El, and social justice apprenticeships include voter registration, and a LGBT or reproductive rights project.

The Techno Challenge: Participants will take the challenge of balancing their use of technology and their connection to the natural world. One's ability to make informed food choices, use technology wisely, unplug and have fun is supported. Excursions include a trip to The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and a pagan ritual, social justice apprenticeships include UU Animal Ministries and Petition Sunday.

YEAR 3

The Take-Down Challenge: Participants will explore the challenge of making peace in a culture full of interpersonal violence. Basic skills of active listening, de-escalation of tension, conflict resolution, and non-participation in violence will be practiced. Excursions include a trip to the Quaker Meeting House and Congregationalist Church, and social justice apprenticeships include Crisis Nursery and The Gandhi Institute.

The Herd Challenge: Participants will explore the challenge of not following the crowd when pressures to conform are high. Basic skills of reduction of social anxiety and fear, critical moral reasoning, resistance to peer pressure, and free religious inquiry will be practiced. Excursions include a trip to My Father's House and Spiritus Christi, and social justice apprenticeships include Teen Empowerment and Connect and Breathe.

CALF Leadership Team Roles

Last year in collaboration with our youth, I fostered the inception of an adult-youth leadership team, which the youth named, "CALF" (Child-Adult Leadership Forum), as related to the Saint Lawrence District Youth-Adult Committee, "YAC!" The mission of CALF is to serve the needs of Youth Group, providing balanced programming in all areas (social justice, community building, education, spirituality and leadership development) within the Religious Education and First Unitarian mission, and to manage group concerns. The first year was one of growth and adjustment. With several (too many) youth on CALF, we worked at figuring out a new system of relationships, planning, and accountability. Even so, the youth did more programmatically than in the last six years of my tenure! These 2015 CALF roles are the fruit of that learning, with positions defined in title and function by the youth themselves.

I've learned that cultural shifts happen slowly and that youth will lead the way to their own empowerment, given the right kind of adult support and structure. Developmentally, the structure has given our youth the age-appropriate ability to make choices and take responsibility for much of their own growth.

CALF ROLES:

Moderator:

- Facilitate Youth and CALF meetings
- Create Agendas with Miss Sherrie
- Program Planning
- Point Person for CALF for youth CALF team
- Pre – Con Prep and inform peers of rules and guidelines
- Support the calendar

Junior Moderator:

- Support Moderator and offer assistance when needed
- Facilitate meetings in the absence of Moderator
- Support the calendar with Moderator
- Offer help in Pre – Con planning

Program Coordinator/ Social Justice:

- Support program facilitators
- Track progress and monitor completion: Follow through!
- Point person to develop programming with Miss Sherrie that responds to the social justice issues of our country and community. Programming needs to reflect the values of living mindfully and loving faithfully
- Reserve spaces
- Gather supplies
- Contact outside groups and secure guest speakers with Miss Sherrie

Secretary/ Communications:

- Prepare notes and minutes before any new meeting so that everyone is prepared
- Newsletter and Parents Newsletter support
- Keep Google Calendar and Facebook updates about calendar events
- Create policy notebook and keep it updated.

Hospitality:

- Welcome new friends to youth group - sit with them and follow up with phone call
- Food – Ask youth group for weekly contributions for bringing in food to our meetings
- Reach out to those who have been absent for a while

YAC Liaison:

- Post all SLD info and events and UUA and region
- Encourage Youth Group to participate in the wider UU community
- Bring back information from YAC to youth group and CALF
- Represent as a CON liaison
- Be a circle support for all UUA activities (restorative circles when a break in covenant)
- Ensure local policies align with the district and broader policies
- Pre- Con prep

Lenses

Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism (ARAOMC)

I continue to evaluate who leads, how groups and worship are structured, and what learning happens for different ages in terms of the impact on our children's understanding of equity, diversity, and interdependence. While I haven't always had a large diversity of identities on RE staff, I aim to share and learn from them as much as possible year to year. I've been taking more risks with younger children to be allies. I also continue to look at the internal subtle structures of our programming, from how much movement and diverse music is in worship, to how much choice youth have in Coming of Age. While for most a high level of stimulation and creativity is positive, for some with special needs, change can be overwhelming!

In regards to curricular selection, we begin very young with a Pre-K focus on We Are Many, We Are One, as well as using Heart Talk, a non-violent communication curriculum. In K- 5, winter workshops in Superhero City always focus on oppression and power in relationships. Junior high youth learn heavily about diversity in religious identities and inclusion, with COA focused on personal reflections of stumbling blocks to living their faith. Youth Group actively addresses oppression anywhere they find it: Last year they brought in a speaker on mental health stigma, participated in our float for Pride Parade, and will host Building Authentic Diversity training this year as part of their con.

Technology

An area of growth for me continues to be the strategic integration of technology at different developmental levels. For the younger children, technology provides useful visuals and information about social justice issues. UU Spiritual Survivors have the Techno Challenge dedicated to how to balance tech use and engagement with the natural world; they will be hosting a Turn the Tech Off Night this year for families. Coming of Age youth learn about how to access UUA and other UU sites of interest, and virtually all Youth Group communication happens through Facebook!

RIGHT RELATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Summary

By far the hardest and most important part of doing religious education is living as a religious educator. As I understand it, if I am to support and nurture others in the process of growth toward deeper engagement with our Principles and Sources, then I too, must be diligent in that practice for myself. Cultural concepts of “job” and “employment” don’t quite suffice to describe the kind of ethical call that our Code of Professional Practices asks of me. How can I expect parents to want their children in the program I create for them, if I am not representing the living of its teachings in congregational life, as well as in my own life? Because when we are educating children and youth the “method is the message,” I see myself as a living breathing billboard that tells the hope of our faith.

The competency of right relations involves the primary skill of listening to dissonance between covenantal agreement, and the lived expression of that agreement. Without this, our faith is weak and my place in it as a leader negligent. Creating safety and the ability of people to become their best selves requires a constant mindful attention to the ways in which relationships are being formed and practiced. Besides our congregational covenant to affirm and promote our Unitarian Universalist Principles, I am also covenanted to be in right relationship as defined by our staff covenant and my professional Code... a high order challenge that underlies how all decisions in my work are ultimately made. The secondary skill beyond covenantal discernment is to create or participate in structures or changes which bring unity when relations break down or oppression exists. As a leader in our faith tradition, I have that particular response ability- the ability to respond in order to make relations right by taking steps required to make them so.

Formation

Structured learning experiences

- ~Peace Circles Facilitation: Partners in Restorative Initiatives (PIRI), 2015 (18 hrs)
- ~Transformations: Empowering Youth through Restorative Practices (PIRI), 2014 (8 hrs)
- ~Non-Violent Communication, RE Staff workshop for First Unitarian, 2013 (3 hrs)
- ~Sexuality and Ethics for the Religious Professional, First Universalist Church, 2012 (10 hrs)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: The Care of Difficult People, 2011 (10 hrs)
- ~Creating Beloved Community for All Children, 2011 (1-day seminar)
- ~Human Resource Seminar: Non-Harassment, First Unitarian Staff, 2010 (3 hrs)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: Family Systems Approach to Congregational Life, 2004 (10 hrs)

Life experience

- ~Developing an in-service day for SLD YAC members on the ethics of interviewing
- ~Serving on the Saint Lawrence District Lay Leader Program development team
- ~Advanced clinical training as a therapist, including child abuse reporting
- ~Departing from my position at May Memorial UU Society
- ~Co-leading monthly enrichments for UU and Catholic couples
- ~Practicing the Family Unity Model with foster families as a clinical social worker
- ~Learning for 16 years in a parochial educational setting
- ~Living in an abusive family system during early development

Application and Integration

RE Monthly Staff Circle

My office has become “The RE Office” because my staff team members expressed a need to be “seen” as well as to feel a sense of having a “place” at church. Over this church year, we have made dedicated work spaces for not only the RE Administrator and myself, but for the Youth Coordinator, Mindfulness Educator, and Director of Junior High Youth and Coming of Age. In the office we work together, support each other, and also gather in circle once a month to take time to recharge collectively as a team.

Our monthly circle includes the following elements: Opening song, chalice lighting, check-in on the monthly worship theme, mindfulness practice on the worship theme, reflection on the call to RE work, sharing in pairs, closing song, chalice extinguishing. While short, the practice has had sustaining power in supporting healthy communication, building affirmation and gratitude, and increasing our commitment to and connection with one another’s work. Especially with a team of part-time individuals, the space and gathering time has created a sense of sharing ministry, and “being in it together.” For me, we cannot create beloved communities if we as a staff team do not model that in the ways we are together.

JANUARY RE STAFF CIRCLE



Children's Annual Meeting

I have conducted a Children's Annual Meeting ever since I began as a DRE. Affirming and promoting the use of the democratic process has been one essential way of staying in right relation with the children I am serving. I could not see myself creating or administering a program which children themselves had no say in, while telling them that our UU church supports their voice and the search for truth and meaning. Most children are baffled every year by the asking! But every year their feedback helps to shape my decisions and keeps a degree of equity in those decisions, even if small. This kind of shared ministry in the creation of program ideas keeps programming relevant and provides a space to share concerns.

Besides playing a game of Jeopardy on things learned during the previous year, children are asked to brainstorm ideas in program areas including social justice, curriculum, worship, church events, etc. Last year's meeting of Kindergarten through 5th graders created the following: guest tickets for adults to attend RE with children; lessons on democratic process, DNA and evolution, Egypt and ancient beliefs, and race; summer curriculum development; special programming days designing; a children's rummage sale; and an all-church pancake breakfast.

2015 Kids Annual Meeting

Jeopardy

Worship

100: What did Thomas Potter build on his farm while waiting for John Murray?

200: (running in place) then taking breaths. This to calm the mind from what.

300: What the Buddha said the acrobat family could do to improve their tricks

400: The tassels on an ear of corn were a reminder to the grandson of this, in the Coming of the Corn

500: He was not MLK but a UU who worked at equality for all people at work

Workshops

100: This church map helped teach us about this spirituality focusing on trees!

200: What story reminded us to be patient for life's gifts, using a sleeping bag in MSS?

300: You made this with a hoola hoop and chalk on the floor.

400: This activity followed reviewing this world map in TCL.

500: This picture represents a Jewish holiday of remembering when you did this

Social Justice

100: We sent this to Honduras to support kids learning colors in English

200: One book, two books, old book, new books!

300: These were made to support the Stand on The Side of this campaign

400: One of the 2 chosen winners of the Greater Good Project (Guon or TE)

500: This was made to support this 5th R! (Refuse to Buy)

? Mystery Category

100: You played this game in TCL to show how the US hogs a lot of the world's resources.

200: The yin and yang symbols are pictures that mean this (1 of 2)

300: This represents something inside of us that helps every human know what is good

400: Our chalice was designed originally for this purpose

500: The science of this office desk toy, were named after a famous UU who discovered the science of electro-magnetism

Our UU Church

100: The number of UU Sources there are

200: One of 7 UU Principles

300: You can go here to help pack backpacks of food

400: Our Spring hunt has you searching for symbols of new life (name 3)

500: Our ministers (name 3)

Energy break-

5 UU Word poems- Touch Blue

Name that tune--- Finish the lyric: (Said first, then sung—using bells for chiming in)

I've got peace...Building up our....Earth My Body, Water My ...Sing to the...My mind is ...Gathered here in one ...In Out, Deep Slow, ...Listen, Open....

Body telephone: Chalice, UU. OR Group Juggle with something you loved this year in RE then backwards!

The Year's Top Three

How to do a brainstorming – ten from group. Narrow to three and vote

~Social justice ideas

~What do you want to learn more about

~Fun stuff

~Leadership ideas

Thank You

Notes to parents for helping out- stars or Huckle Buckle beanstalk with chalice

Con Advisor Intro Sheet and Medication Policy

This past year I collaborated with UUA staff on two important safety issues: changes in medication policy for youth conferences, and guidelines for preparing adults to supervise youth at conferences. Because of the need for policies which govern safety practices for large numbers of children and youth in my program, I am in a unique position to save time and help think through wider issues for the District. This is a draft I sent to UUA Staff, Evin Carville-Zimmer, of a preparation checklist that DREs could use for conference-bound advisors to clearly understand their responsibilities and role. Very well received by colleagues, and the focus of the adult portion of our pre-con meetings, this document provides the information necessary to safeguard youth-adult relations at a conference, and help adults serving youth feel empowered and in right relation with their community and staff.

CON ADVISOR INTRO SHEET

PRE CON

1. Sign all forms (transport, Code of Ethics, rules) and register.
2. Understand that your role is not the same as a public school chaperone—youth community is based in youth empowerment and UU covenant, and your role is to act as a supportive adult who helps maintain safe boundaries and creates safe space.
3. Obtain cell numbers of church leaders, other advisors, and youth for emergency purposes. Be clear on who you can contact and when.
4. Know the history of your youth in regards to their ability and/or willingness to follow rules and live in covenant
5. Know what emotional and medical issues your youth have, especially those that could impact the youth's emotional and physical safety at con (especially allergies, psychological meds). Youth can hold on to birth control, asthma inhalers, epipens or any medication designed to be on the youth at all time. If they have another med that seems like it falls in that category, talk to the district staff upon arrival.
6. Go over how the medication access will be handled by your congregation. Advisors must secure medication in the space provided by the host congregation, and to give your youth access to the medication when needed. Advisors do not dispense meds, only secure them.
7. Be briefed on processes for rule violations and covenant breaches, knowing how these will be communicated to your local congregational leaders.

TRAVELING

1. Have your transportation form and the youth registration (including medical and emergency info) forms in your car.
2. Support the con rules and code of ethics during transportation.
3. DO NOT drive if you are overly tired or feel weather conditions are unsafe. Youth are not allowed to drive.

AT THE CON

1. Hand in the registration and money for your youth, noting any issues around advising, special needs, etc., maintaining a copy of the medical authorization/emergency contact info for your youth.
2. Go to the advisor orientation to the schedule and space.

3. Youth define your participation level during the events. Your role is really to support, not to be involved as a teen - your boundaries are clearly adult. Be authentically yourself and get to know the youth.
4. During free time, take care of yourself- bring some things that you can do that are relaxing.
5. If you have any question regarding a rule violation or something that seems out of covenant, seek immediate counsel from a youth on the Youth Adult Committee or another advisor. Do not hesitate!
6. Check in with your youth occasionally — more often with youth who are new to the con. If youth are struggling, also refer to the youth chaplain or seek their counsel. Let the youth know who to reach out to after you are sleeping.
7. While you are providing particular support for your youth, you are supporting all youth. Do not hesitate to respond to a concern, need, or situation that calls for help or affirmation.

AFTER THE CON

1. Be sure youth are safely picked up. Communicate with parents if you have the chance about your experience with their teen.
2. Provide feedback to the youth and leaders in your community about the con.

Lenses

Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism (ARAOMC)

One reason the RE Staff Circle has been a grounding point for right relations is that it has allowed my staff to voice their own sense of oppression. One case being that our Director of Early Childhood who is African- American, could talk about how it was for her to be welcomed as a “visitor” even though she has worked at the church for a few years. Affirming her value to the congregation and acknowledging how difficult for her not to feel accepted, were important team needs. The conversation had me reaching out to our Membership Coordinator to request for more ARAOMC training for greeters.

Technology

Having online chat, text, or email communications with staff or congregants around anything with emotional content or concerns has the risks of distortion and disconnection. So much of what we say to one another is communicated in tone and body language that without these, communication can be complicated and hurtful. One way that it has had saving power for me though, has been in my relationship with our Mindfulness Educator. We lead the parents group together in mindfulness practice and non-violent communication, encouraging the practice of “.b”, a teen-friendly shorthand meaning “pause and breathe in the moment.” She and I use this in our lives outside of church, texting nothing but “.b” to provide mutual support in the practices we aim for others to use.

SEXUAL HEALTH

Summary

Basic to being human, sexuality plays an integral part of relational connection with self and others. To celebrate and nurture healthy sexuality is to honor each person's inherent worth and dignity, as well as to respect the interdependent web which we all are born out of and a living part of. For me a healthy sense of oneself includes a positive relationship to one's whole body, and an ongoing exploration of the many aspects of sexuality including one's physiological health, sensuality, identity, and intimacy.

The greater my own education in sexuality and the more skilled and comfortable in helping families, facilitators, and classroom guests learn together that I become, the more able I am to support the transformative power of the Our Whole Lives curriculum. Being vulnerable enough to allow myself to continue to grow through program oversight and advocacy has been a key to staying healthy as a religious professional. Also, beyond OWL, assessing and supporting general health practices and integrating physical engagement in other areas of worship and social justice education have been a matter of conscience for me.

Formation

Structured learning experiences

- ~Our Whole Lives Training Update, 2016
- ~Sexuality and Ethics for the Religious Professional, First Universalist Church, 2012 (10 hrs)
- ~Human Resource Seminar: Non-Harassment, First Unitarian Staff, 2010 (3 hrs)
- ~Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education Training for Grades 7-9 and 10-12, 2002
- ~Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education Training for Adults, 2002
- ~Renaissance Module: Ministry with Youth, 2002

Life experience

- ~Being in community with many non-cisgender youth
- ~Addressing sexuality issues from adults: rape, BDSM, polyamory, pornography
- ~Engaging in gender roles and activities that are non-traditional
- ~Advocating for LGBTQIA rights in PRIDE parades and politically
- ~Dating in an age of social media and technology
- ~Being denied Catholic Engaged Encounter leadership due to stance on birth control
- ~Having close friends who are gay parents
- ~Working with sexually abused children, and reporting disclosures
- ~Developing birth plans for the natural deliveries of my children
- ~Being the younger sister of a teenage mother

Notable viewing

"The Danish Girl," 2015. Film profoundly affected my understanding of transgender identity, history, and partnerships

Application and Integration

Rainbow Valentines for Our Congregation

This session in the Superhero City workshop room, focused on the Standing on the Side of Love campaign, specifically about LGBTQIA advocacy. After reading a fun book about two gay dads, children made a valentine for someone in the congregation and attached a Standing on the Side of Love sticker to it (for wearing or passing on), along with some rainbow Skittles. Everyone loved this! As a religious educator I feel the need to address secular traditions and how they may or may not fully affirm our values. A few years prior, we sent rainbow valentines to political leaders regarding the right of couples to marry. These activities for young children help build a foundation for life-long celebration of sexual diversity and always elicit conversations about oppression and advocacy.

WORKSHOP ADVENTURE

Winter 2014-2015

SUPERHERO CITY

INTRODUCTIONS AND WARM UP FUN: Brief fun activity to get to know your group members a little...

Rainbow mix up- give each child a group of same colored hearts. Invite each person to share one of their hearts with someone else, telling them something that is unique about themselves. Sit down when you have a complete rainbow.

Today we are going to learn about STANDING ON THE SIDE OF LOVE which is a way that as UUs we say we stand up/ affirm/ love people for who they are.

LISTENING CIRCLE: We listen to each person say one thing from their listening inside, and do not interrupt or comment. It can be a celebration or mourning, or just how you are feeling inside right now.

DEEPER LISTENING TO THE STORY: Review the story very briefly and which wisdom Source it comes from. Ask the children to listen more deeply: What was the most important part of the story for you? Where are you in the story? What part of this is about < INTEGRITY or FAITH>?

SUPERHERO and BEYOND CHURCH VIDEO INTRO: One of the ways we have INTEGRITY and show our FAITH is by coming together to make sure that people are not oppressed or put down for being different. Our UU faith has a "Standing on the side of love" campaign which calls us to do what we can to help people feel loved and allow people to love in ways that are life-affirming for them.

Show short video from Standing on Side of Love website

GOING DEEPER THROUGH ACTIVITY: Explain to the children that today they are invited to be part of the following activity to explore the wisdom of the story for themselves more in the

Superhero City:

Activity 1: Flag and Book

Before you begin to read the book, ask if any child knows what the rainbow flag means (or the rainbow from the UU PRIDE parade float) that is in the room.

Affirm that standing on the side of love means allowing people to love who they are and love other people. Read the story: One Dad Two Dads, Brown Dad Blue Dad

Ask the children to say something that is funny but true in the book. And what does the book have to teach/remind us about different kinds of love and families?

Activity 2: Rainbow Valentines for Valentine's Day

In our culture, there are many ways still that people are not loved for who they are or respected just because they love in a different way. We are going to prepare some SURPRISE Valentines for ALL people and let them know we STAND ON THE SIDE OF LOVE! The valentines will be saved for that weekend and given to people at coffee hour or to specific people who work for LBGTQ awareness.

RECAP:

Back to centering circle for brief sharing. One minute- to review what you did in workshop.

Closing Check out: What are you grateful for from this workshop that you can take with you as you *Listen, Open, Serve Every Day* this week?

Our Whole Lives in Spiritual Survivor

At First Universalist Church of Syracuse, I surveyed youth who had taken a full-year course in OWL as 8th graders and asked them to be very honest about their experience. What I read surprised me. Among the comments about how beneficial the learning was, there were significant comments about how it was “too much” and an attitude summed up by one youth who wrote, “Would YOU like to have sex ed. every time you come to church for a year?” When I became the DRE in Rochester and mapped out my ideal curriculum for 6-8th graders, that comment stuck in my mind. At the time, I was also stretched to find teaching teams who could show up every Sunday for a church year!

What I have since institutionalized is a system of integrating OWL as a child grows through adolescence. Beginning in 5th grade with OWL 4-6th, youth progress through the OWL 7-9th curriculum each year during January and February for seven weeks, completing it during Coming of Age. Teaching teams “graduate” up with their group so that participants have an established trust and relational history with them. The reception from teachers, youth, and parents has been very positive. As a religious educator, this adjustment in curriculum mapping embodies respect for developmental differences, and promotes positive parent-child communication about sexuality through a significant period of sexual change and values discernment.

6th Grade/ TIM FRITZ CHRIS	7th Grade / JULIE AND JACK
1 What is Sexuality?	Intro and Body Image
2 Examining Values	7 Gender Identity
3 The Language of Sexuality	8 Gender Expression, Roles...
4 Anatomy and Physiology	9 Sexual Orientation
5 Personal Concerns About Puberty	10 Guest Panel
6 Body Image	11 Sexuality and Disability
OFF WINTER BREAK	OFF WINTER BREAK
Leftover exercises/current questions	12 Healthy Relationships
8th Grade/ STEVEN AND SARAH	9th Grade/ NANCY AND JOHN
Intro and 12 Healthy Relationships	18 Intro and Consent Education
13 Relationship Skills	19 Sexually Transmitted Infections
14 Sexuality, Social Media & Internet	20 Pregnancy, Parenting, Teenage
15 Bullying & Bystander Responsibilities	21 Unintended Pregnancy Options
16 Redefining Abstinence	22 Contraception and Safer Sex
17 Lovemaking	23 Sexual Decision Making
OFF WINTER BREAK	OFF WINTER BREAK
18 Consent Education	24 Communicating with a Sexual Partner
	25 Self Care

Saint Lawrence District Youth Events Policies

One of the legacies of my ministry is a long history of advocating for safe practices at youth conferences, especially in the areas of sexuality. This brainstorm list of ideas for improving safety was the result of a long process. I had been made aware of unsafe practices and sexual activity at a conference. Problems included inadequate supervision and training of overnight staff, poor response by SLD leadership to reports, failure to report among teens, and lack of organizational supports to create a safe environment. I was not a very popular DRE for disseminating information to all parents of youth about these conditions and reported rule violations! But staying in the fire and dealing with the truth openly allowed more youth to come forward and talk frankly about what was actually going on. Eventually, this list developed at First Unitarian by a collaborative effort of teens and their parents, was sent to the District as feedback. The SLD Board became a partner and supported the Youth Adult Committee in addressing the problematic issues and in the end, much stronger practices and guidelines for youth safety were implemented.

First Unitarian Youth and Adult suggestions for changes to SLD con

Training:

1. Standardize district rules for all CONS, making sure that the web page is accurate.
2. Encourage all congregations to have pre-con meetings with everyone that is attending before departure, to discuss weekend expectations and become more familiar with one another so there is an established comfort level between youth and adults.
3. Create a specific training, required by the district, for the adult supervisors and overnight volunteers so that all CON support structures are consistent from CON to CON. Use a checklist for the awake night volunteers to orient them to their tasks, timeframes, map of awake and asleep areas, and use of flashlights for rounds.
4. Ensure that youth and adults in their planning have properly set up the con to comply with basic supervisory guidelines, proper room designations, organizational issues such as free time and scheduling that could be potential safety issues. The district youth coordinator would be responsible that all policies and procedures are in place beforehand, and would act on site as a resource.
5. A specific training for all YAC members established and utilized so that all members are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Ensure that all responsibilities, especially in areas of liability and reporting of incidents, are clear to both the YAC members as well as the host congregational staff and volunteers.
6. Establish a training for Chaplains and provide a training manual for them; ensure that CON goers all understand the Chaplain's role, especially regarding the limits of confidentiality.
7. Create a new system of gradation for consequences of rule breaking and make it known in the permission form. Establish parental responsibility of coming to get their youth for rule violation versus entire carload going home for other youth's offense. This may help youth report concerns more readily and not withhold to prevent themselves from having to go home. Establish procedure, including who is notified, based on each grade of offense.

Weekend Structure:

1. Create a better use of touch groups to grow trust and community and eliminate exclusivity throughout the weekend. Ensure that touch groups have more structured activity, are not longer than 20 minutes, and have one adult assigned to each who would not lead, but be there as a support. Ensure that touch groups happen at the end of free time on Saturday to bring everyone back together.
2. Tighten free times and workshops to prevent exclusivity and wandering off of youth to unsupervised areas.
3. Overnight ratios should be no less than 1:20 with only awake adults considered in the ratio. (Minimum of two adults walking around monitoring all sleeping and other areas. One minimum additional adult to be stationed in a large comfortable community space where youth who want to stay up can hang out. If only small rooms available, one adult to monitor every 15 minutes)
4. Each sleeping room (males, females, gender neutral) should have one adult sleeping in them to deter youth from entering rooms they shouldn't. "We have a room for female teens, a room for male teens, and a third room for those who prefer a gender neutral space."
5. No shared bedding or shared covers allowed for any activity.
6. Free time should have a few designated choices, ideally one social action choice. Youth to sign up on Saturday MORNING for which free time choice they will be attending. Adults and youth gather prior to departure to ensure all safety materials, ratios, identification of who's who, is taken care of. Those remaining are in designated areas.

Youth Orientation:

1. Create a big brother/big sister program to help instill trust in con virgins and ensure that they have support and modeling of appropriate CON rules.
2. YAC to restate the CON rules on Saturday.
3. YAC to present consequences and seriousness of rules through interactive role play.

Other:

1. Consider having the Spiritual Growth Committee meet once on Friday and twice on Saturday to ensure the process is actively in place; review any incidents or log notes.
2. Have a log book for YAC to report incidents in so that they can all be aware of instances they have individually handled.
3. Have a separate book for CON members (youth and adults) to write in to voice concerns if they aren't comfortable voicing them aloud to give attention to a situation that needs to be monitored. The book should be monitored hourly by YAC and adult volunteers.
4. Adults are responsible to handle situations without having to go find a YAC member. They will then write it in the book so that all YAC members and other adult volunteers are aware of the incident.
5. Implement a curfew after the last nightly event that sleeping rooms become quiet for those who want to sleep and the awake room is available for those who want to stay awake.
6. Sleeping areas better lit with nightlights.
7. All day rooms clearly marked for NO ENTRANCE during breaks.
8. A procedure for medication storage, logging, and dispensing should be added to CON

practices.

9. Liability for damages (personal or property) should be made clear to the host congregation staff.

SAMPLE

Lenses

Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism (ARAOMC)

I collaborated with a LGBTQIA group at church to jointly host an evening on local LGBT history with our youth group. *Shoulders to Stand On* is a documentary about the local gay rights movement and includes footage of gay picnics, protests, police interviews, and people leading the charge. The film's director led a discussion with the gathered group after the film. What mattered about this experience most was both the witness of "how far we have come" and having deeper appreciation for people who sacrificed and worked so hard within our own community. I also more deeply understood the reading I had done years before which stated that social responsibility and activism is most likely in children and youth who have roots in a particular place and its history.

Technology

The increased use of video clips and online information in the revised OWL curriculum has supported youth in integrating wisdom in ways they are accustomed to. Presenting positive messages and health information from the web counteracts exposure to damaging images of sexuality, pornography, and value-less surfing. Dealing directly with online bullying and social media risks helps youth gain skills in practicing their values at home. Having the technology at church used in this way makes the educational experience feel up-to-date and relevant to today's rapidly changing online environment.

SIX SOURCES OF UU INSPIRATION

Summary

The ways children and youth encounter our UU Sources has an impact on their religious identity. While many people mistakenly see Unitarian Universalism as an “umbrella” of faiths, investigating more closely how religious education programs integrate Sources would prove our denomination not to be so. My choices in this process have become more meticulous over the years, because my understanding of the drawing from these rich “wisdom wells,” as an essential and unique facet of our tradition, has deepened.

I have facilitated significant programmatic changes regarding Source integration: revising the workshop rotation rooms to reflect learning from the six Sources, building a lectionary of Source readings for junior youth and Coming of Age, direct teaching about the Six Sources, and changing the context of visitation to other places of worship in Spiritual Survivor. As a religious educator, being articulate about how we are “inspired by” versus that we simply “borrow, piece together, or tolerate” seems an essential skill. Beyond that, to enliven our children and youth to love this way of being religiously oriented is a responsibility of the highest order!

Formation

Structured learning experiences

- ~LREDA Fall Con: Theme-Based Ministry, 2015 (Co-lead)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training- UU Faith Formation in the 21st Century: Building Beyond Sunday Morning, 2015 (10 hrs.)
- ~Mindfulness in Education Teacher Training, 2015 (6 hrs.)
- ~Dream of the Good, 2010 (3-day retreat integrating spiritual practices into Pre-K- high school)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: Science, Faith, and Values, 2006 (10 hrs.)
- ~New York State Convention of Universalists: Sacred Stories Theater- Incorporating stories into RE programs. Albany, 2002 (Self-Lead)
- ~Renaissance Module in Worship: August, 2000
- ~Renaissance Module in Philosophy: March, 1999

Life experience

- ~Learning yoga, Qi gong, chakra breath work, meditation, chanting
- ~Being an advocate for religious diversity awareness in a small rural school district
- ~Advocating for legal boundaries between church and state
- ~Participating in events that celebrated Indian Nation rights
- ~Refusing to have my children engage in Thanksgiving plays
- ~Owning a home in an Indian Land Claim area
- ~Working with families of various faith traditions during the grieving process

- ~Working with youth from a diversity of faith backgrounds in foster care, including fundamentalist militant Islam
- ~Being employed as a live-in nanny for a Jewish family
- ~Joining the Agape Christian Fellowship in college
- ~“Church hopping” as a young adult
- ~Playing lead role in a traveling Mystery Play in high school
- ~Evolving my own beliefs from a theistic upbringing

Application and Integration

Workshop Adventure Room Designations and Sample Lesson (The Guru Gym: Shintoism)

Wanting our RE program for K-5th to more closely embody our RE mission of “teaching children and youth to listen, open, serve... by drawing on countercultural wisdom (UU Sources),” I made the leap to switch workshop rooms and curricular content to more closely be defined by our UU Sources. Each week children attend worship and then go to a room in which they learn from one of the six (rather than simply art, music, movement, nature, etc). For many adults, having six UU Sources was news! But overwhelmingly, parents loved the kind of balance and grounding in each Source that this structure provides, and the volunteer leaders often comment on how they are also learning with the children.

WORKSHOP ADVENTURE ROOMS

MY SACRED STAGE – Learning from our own life experiences and wonderings to help us to stay open to life’s gifts again and again. Was Theater Room

SOURCE 1: Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

SUPER HERO CITY- Learning from the words and actions of UU people to know how to stand up to and change evil. Was Faith Footsteps

SOURCE 2: Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love

GURU GYM- Learning from the great religions of the world about how to deeply connect to self, other, and all of life (teachings and practices). Was Movement

SOURCE 3: Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life

THE GOOD NEIGHBORHOOD- Learning from Jewish and Christian teachings about how to love your neighbor as yourself

SOURCE 4: Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves. Was Mini World

THINKING CAP LAB- Learning from humanist teachings to use science and brain power to protect us from the dangers of hurtful ideas, using our energy to serve humanity

SOURCE 5: Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit

NATURE CENTER- Learning from the earth and pagan teachings about how to celebrate and live in harmony with the rhythms of nature

SOURCE 6: Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Guru Gym- Shintoism

WORKSHOP ADVENTURE

Spring 2014-2015

GURU GYM

INTRODUCTIONS AND WARM UP FUN:

Brief fun activity to get to know your group members a little...

Pass Through the Gate

With the gate (makeshift) in the center of the Guru Gym, have everyone start on one side. Since this is the time of spring and transformation, when you pass under the gate, you are invited to change into something wonderful. The only rule is not to touch the gate and be respectful of boundaries with your body. Stay on the blue rugs. The Workshop Leader will say, "Pass through the gate and become..." a hawk, a wasp, a thunderstorm, a bull frog. Then become something in the natural world you love and announce it as you pass under and find your way to the centering circle.

Discussion and World Religious Symbol: Shinto

Summarize in your own words:

~Shinto ("the way of the Kami") is the name of the formal state religion of Japan that was first used in the 6th century C.E., although the roots of the religion go back to at least the 6th century B.C.E.

~Shinto has no founder, no official sacred texts, and no formalized system of doctrine. Shinto has been formative in developing uniquely Japanese attitudes and sensitivities, creating a distinct Japanese consciousness.

~Belief in *kami*—sacred or divine beings, although also understood to be spiritual essences—is one of the foundations of Shinto. Shinto understands that the *kami* not only exist as spiritual beings, but also in nature; they are within mountains, trees, rivers, and even geographical regions. In this sense, the *kami* are not like the all-powerful divine beings found in Western religion, but the abstract creative forces in nature.

~Shinto followers are supposed to live in harmony and peaceful coexistence with both nature and other human beings. This has enabled Shinto to exist in harmony with other religious traditions.

~Shinto shrines are the sacred sites where rituals and practices honoring *kami* take place.



Torii Gate:

The Torii gate religious symbol marks the entrance to sacred space. It represents the transition between the finite world and the infinite world of the gods.

These gates are seen all around Japan! Share this quote as an example of Shinto belief before you move to your listening circle—what do you think?!

Even in one single leaf on a tree, or in one blade of grass, the awesome Deity presents itself.

LISTENING CIRCLE: This is our listening circle. We take two big breaths together to make a quiet circle. We listen to each person say one thing from their listening inside, and do not interrupt or comment. It can be a celebration or a mourning, or just how you are feeling inside right now.

DEEPER LISTENING TO THE STORY:

Review the story very briefly and which wisdom Source it comes from. Ask the children to listen more deeply: What was the most important part of the story for you? Where are you in the story? What part of this is about < RESILIENCE or REVELATION>?

GOING DEEPER THROUGH ACTIVITY:

Explain to the children that today they are invited to be part of the following activity to explore the wisdom of the story in the Guru Gym:

Activity 1: The Shinto religion involves the visiting of shrines that are said to house Kami. Wonder together about what might be considered sacred spaces in our church or grounds? What other sacred spaces that hold special power do kids know of in their own lives? Have children go outside if weather permits, choosing partners or threesomes for walking. Go down to the area behind the back side of the labyrinth where it is wild and give children an area to work in. Invite them to choose one thing in nature that speaks to them of having sacredness or inviting awe.

Have each pair design a sacred space that features that one part of nature, marking the entrance to their design in any way they wish. Provide a time limit. Remind them it can be very simple. Invite the group to visit each space on a wonder tour and notice the beauty of the creation.

If you absolutely can't go out due to rain or snow, either have children design simple indoor shrines using natural material, or give them the choice to draw one of the sacred spaces in their lives. Again, do a wonder tour.

RECAP:

Back to centering circle for brief sharing. One minute review what you did in workshop.

Closing Check out: What is one way in which you can *Listen, Open, Serve, Every day* that is inspired by the Shinto teaching about divine energy in creation?

UU Sources in Children's Worship- "The Cherry Blossoms"

Every week children are engaged in acting out a story from a UU Source. Stories express some aspect of the worship theme for the month which the entire church is exploring. By far my favorite part of any morning, this kind of impromptu storytelling has its share of surprises and teachings. With a simple script in my mind, I enlist children in the embodiment of the Source material directly. People of all ages love being "a part of the story," whether giving witness to it, playing roles, or sharing reflections after. I believe learning and celebrating this way helps us "be inspired" to grow from the teachings and tales as we "show up" in them or "hear" them. Children meet the teachings as they grow up, sometimes every year, without tire or complaint... part of a rich experience to build a rich inner life.

"The Cherry Blossoms" from One Hand Clapping: Zen Stories for All Ages

A nun, Rengetsu by name, was on a pilgrimage when she stopped in a small town seeking shelter for the night. It had been a long and difficult journey and she was very tired. She went from door to door asking for a place to stay.

R: I would be so grateful if you would allow me the comfort of a room.

Villager 1: I am sorry we haven't any extra space for you here. With the children and all, are rooms are full.

R: I see.

So Rengetsu walked on and again she was turned away.

R: I would be so grateful if you would allow me the comfort of a room. Villager 2: No room here!

Rengetsu continued on, somewhat dismayed. It was sunset and getting darker by the minute, so she finally just made her bed for the night in a field of cherry trees. In the middle of the night she awoke to find the cherry trees in full blossom beneath a beautiful silvery moon. The sight was breathtaking!!! Awed by this unexpected beauty, she turned toward the village, bowed, and uttered this little prayer of thanks:

R: Through their kindness in refusing me lodging, I found myself beneath the beautiful blossoms on the night of the misty moon.



The Loner Challenge- Session 2: Here May No One Be A Stranger

The Loner Challenge in our UU Spiritual Survivor program for junior high youth is a ten week curriculum that explores isolation and belonging as a pre-teen. This activity includes a discussion of responses to religious accessories and dress, teaches about the reasons for such practices, and also helps youth have a deeper understanding of both the potential isolation/persecution they may result in, or conversely, the potential sense of spiritual power, and belonging they may nurture. The session aims to not only increase awareness and comfort level with religious diversity, to support advocacy for religious acceptance, but to have conversation with youth about their own sense of being isolated due to their beliefs, way of being religious as UUs, and how to address religious prejudice.

LOOKS AND LABELS

Ask members of your group to volunteer to leave the room and come back in with religiously associated paraphernalia/accessories (yarmulke, cross, chalice necklace, wiccan star, burka like scarf, etc.) Before anyone speaks, use mindfulness to pay attention to what physical or mental reactions come up. What might you judge or assume about them that is positive? What might you judge or assume that is negative?

On newsprint brainstorm: How could your views isolate them or affect your behavior towards them?

To post and review:

- Not everyone in a faith believes or does the same thing
- You cannot assume you know a person based on appearance
- As Unitarian Universalists living in a diverse culture, it is important to understand the symbols or accessories of a faith group, what they mean and why they are used.
- We can tune into the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and also critically test our judgments of others based on:
Is their faith helping them to listen to their deepest selves? Is it helping them to continue to open to life's gifts?
Is it helping them serve needs greater than their own? In what ways?
These are the deeper questions beyond appearance to reflect on when meeting someone of another faith.

Lenses

Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism (ARAOMC)

In the fall of 2015, I approached Rev. Emily about acknowledging the local history of oppression of indigenous peoples from our region, the Seneca Indian Nation. She supported my request for the inclusion of children and youth in the first part of adult worship on Columbus Day weekend. I wrote the script for and developed a simple walking ritual for the occasion, calling us to move forward in peace with all people, protecting the earth for many generations forward. Congregants were moved and grateful for this simple way of countering a cultural tradition with reflection, affirmation, and lifting up of one of our local earth-based traditions.

Technology

Quick online searches allow me the ability to integrate background material for my workshop leaders and directors, making it less intimidating not to be an “expert” in every Source! Clips from websites of other faith traditions, humanist teachings, science, famous UUs, etc. allow me to tailor sessions to what leaders need to know. Also, the online search engine for themes in Tapestry of Faith has helped me draw Source material into summer curricular planning. In addition to all these, I am inspired to transform articles and cultural issues in the social media into food for reflection during the Moment of Inquiry in children’s worship.

SYSTEMS AND CONFLICT

Summary

Just as in a family, a congregational system will undoubtedly have conflict within it and will change over time. Being able to manage conflict so it is healthy and being able to nurture movement through change are essential to spurring growth and maintaining wholeness. Without good leadership and guidance, conflict and changes can result in painful disconnection and spiritual disillusionment for any part of a congregational system. Especially as a religious educator in a covenantal community, the responsibility to pay conscious attention to emerging dynamics in relationships and the potential consequences of one's decisions on the wider system, are important spiritual practices of the role.

Religious educators can play a critical part in "educating" how Unitarian Universalists can respond with integrity to challenges both in program planning and by example on the staff/ministry team. As someone who teaches about how to live our UU Principles, I also am the example of how it is supposed to work, and why it is an amazing faith to live! I can also provide the skills and tools needed for children, youth, and parents, to be able to deepen their practice of covenant in their family system, at church, in the community and wider world. Most essential for a positive impact is the capacity to be able to manage my own anxiety and maintain appropriate professional boundaries. And with that, comes the need to be able to build a network of support, to engage in health practices that reduce anxiety and stress, to be honest and transparent, and to cultivate openness to the many gifts that change can usher in.

Formation

Structured learning experiences

- ~Peace Circles Facilitation: Partners in Restorative Initiatives (PIRI), 2015 (18 hrs)
- ~Transformations: Empowering Youth through Restorative Practices (PIRI), 2014 (8 hrs)
- ~Non-Violent Communication, RE Staff workshop for First Unitarian, 2013 (3 hrs)
- ~Developing a Vision for Religious Education, UU Monclair, 2012 (2 days Self-lead)
- ~UUA Large Conference: Governance and Ministry in Large Congregations, 2011 (3 days)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: The Care of Difficult People, 2011 (10 hrs.)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: Effective to Transformative Leadership, 2010 (10 hrs.)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: Family Systems Approach to Congregational Life, 2004 (10 hrs.)
- ~Increasing Unirondack Communication with SL District Constituencies, 2004 (4 hrs, Self-lead)
- ~Human Resource Seminar: Non-Harassment, First Unitarian Staff, 2010 (3 hrs)

Life experience

- ~Leading Peace Circle processes for District YAC and local cases of covenant violation
- ~Managing staff turnover and staff conflicts
- ~Experiencing the death of a parent when young, and again this past fall
- ~Divorce and move from home with children
- ~Coming into my current DRE position needing to start up Workshop Rotation
- ~Departing after congregational conflict at May Memorial
- ~Developing rites of passage for congregations and my own children
- ~Facilitating family meetings
- ~Co-facilitating monthly enrichments for couples
- ~Providing group therapy for children and adolescents at Benjamin Rush Psychiatric Center
- ~Serving as a captain on many athletic teams
- ~Growing up in a blended family of 14

Application and Integration

Peace Circles with Youth

Peace Circles is a methodology used as a format for building community as well as for healing community when connection breaks down in relationships. After training in Peace Circles last summer, I integrated the practice in these areas of youth ministry (in collaboration with Reverend Marcus and my Youth Coordinator): As the framework for a weekly opening check-in and reflection on the monthly worship theme in youth group, as a method for addressing conflicts and behavior that represent breaches in covenant, and as a possible model for our Saint Lawrence District to use at Youth Conferences for Spirit Committee work. This outline is a training I did for our District Youth Leadership Conference in November, 2015, following a circle I facilitated for the SLD Youth Adult Committee due to a rule violation.

While the method is pre-defined, this training represents the application of the circle process to youth ministry work and asks youth to imagine further application. Very well received, the training helped youth transform ideas of a punishment-based system of governance to a more democratic way of increasing accountability and promotion of covenant in youth community life.

INTRODUCTION TO PEACE CIRCLES: Leadership Con Training at First Universalist, Syracuse, 2015

Why A Circle? Physical format: encourages respectful active listening face to face, equitable level, away from parliamentary to consensus building, creates space of empowerment/responsibility to the whole...

The Circle Process is based on a simple notion: Because we all want to be in good relationships with others, when we create a space that is respectful and reflective, people can find their way through anger, pain, and fear to find a common ground and take care of one another. Though the concept is simple, the practice is not.

In many ways our culture encourages separation, demonization of those who disagree, competition, hierarchy, and reliance on experts to solve problems. – Kay Pranis, The Little Book of Circle Processes

Basic Elements- Set Up including Center, Opening, Guidelines/Promises, Stated Purpose of Circle, Talking Piece, Circle Questions/Rounds/Storytelling, Keeper Role, Consensus/Recap, Closing

Kinds of Circles- Touch Group Duos

LEVEL 1: Community Building, Talking, Understanding, Support, Healing, Celebration

LEVEL 2: Problem Solving, Decision Making, Conflict, Sentencing, Reintegration

What is NOT a Circle? Evaluative Groups, Therapy Groups, Classroom Meeting, Family Meeting

CON Circle Possibilities: Touch Groups, In Worship/Celebrations, Spirit Committee (Restorative Circles and the Social Discipline Window), etc.

Examples from real life

Closing and Proper Usage

Parenting as a Spiritual Practice

This monthly parents group includes skills-based training in Non-Violent Communication and mindfulness practice related to the monthly worship theme. The group began as a 20-minute pilot we ran while parents had time on their hands, waiting for their children to be released from OWL groups. Co-lead and co-written with my Mindfulness Educator, Janice Cook, the group involves both instruction, time for practice and sharing, and closing with celebrations and mournings. Our attendance of about 15 to 20 for three years now, shows an ongoing need for parents to have skills-based education and communal support to live their values well in their family systems. Addressing real life conflict in the home openly and within a framework of acceptance and spiritual growth, has transformed their experience of conflict and change, giving them tools to address it with more confidence and response flexibility.

Oct 24 FAITH You're So Worth Your Attention!

Our spiritual practice during the month of FAITH is to pause using our mindfulness, and respond to the need for being seen. In this we affirm and promote inherent worth and dignity at a very basic and essential level.

Mindfulness Practice 1: Feet On Floor, Bum On Chair (From .b program)

Seeing the self and feeling connection:

Take a few moments to scan the contact with the floor and seat, and open up to the support that is there for you. Emphasize this connection with support in your felt sense, letting gravity take your weight as you take a pause from current concerns and preoccupations. Let go into this connection with the earth. As thoughts arise telling you what you should be doing, let those thoughts drift away and come back with your attention in your body. Be the mirror to your breath, follow it in and out, watching it. Feel the sensation of your lungs and body moving, as much as you can as the air is moving in and out, expanding and contracting and rocking your body. Feel your spine moving upward on the inhale, and let go of any tension down into the earth on the exhale. Wherever your attention falls, acknowledge what is there and simply allow it to be there without judgment. Finally, rest and breathe for a few more moments as you open your senses to the space, sounds and colors around you.

Non-Violent Communication Intro:

- 1) Our FAITH calls us to affirm and promote inherent worth and dignity. In NVC, this would be the practice of listening and responding to your needs, and those of others. (Infinity overlapping triangle).
- 2) In NVC, being seen and seeing others is a Universal Need we all have as humans on the planet, among many others. Everyone needs to be "gotten," to be understood and accepted. Developmentally one of the most primary needs for healthy sense of self, compassion, and attachment is facial recognition and support in the emotional regulation with a care giver.
- 3) Culturally, many forces surround us as parents that draw our attention away from this

very basic need for ourselves and our children:

*Not having time because of crazy schedules to see what's going on in us & our children

*Habituation or narrowing by cultural images of being seen and seeing our children (I'm the good soccer mom doing everything and he is my star son)

*Isolation as parents by inner or outer judgements (the comparative mentality "I am not good enough", and not ever truly seeing the Jones').

Our cultural suffering around race is one very visible way that systemically, the need of people to see and be seen is not being met which has historically resulted in systemic violence and oppression.

NVC Practice Exercise: Take a few deep breaths and...

Remember a time when you felt seen or did not this week OR Remember a time when you were able to really "see" your child or missed the chance to recently.

Share 2 minutes with a partner: This seeing is part of the practice! Allow mourning and celebration. Notice a lack of happiness and additional self-punishment, judgment, anger, etc., when the need to see and be seen is not met. Notice the satisfaction when it is.

Closing Gratitude- share what you are grateful for from this time.

RE Changes Letter 5/15/2015

This letter was initiated by me, in the absence of notice prior to the annual meeting about the budget cuts that were about to occur in 2015. I wanted parents to be clear on what was happening to the RE budget specifically and why, what those cuts would result in, and what action they could take in relationship to them. My concern was that fiscal changes would be made without open conversation and accurate information, and that not many parents would show up to vote on matters that were going to primarily impact their families.

This letter was actually never sent out. After reading it, the senior minister and Board President collaborated on a letter which they asked to use this as the basis for. I was able to make final edits and affirmed a wider open process for moving through our financial challenges together.

RE Changes

May 15th, 2015

As we are moving through all the final rites of passage in RE, I'm grateful and satisfied by what feels like a year "well-learned." Such a privilege to witness all that you, our children, and youth have experienced- from questions and dialogues in OWL, to laughter and mourning in parents' groups, to restorative youth circles, and baby brunch joy-- all of the stuff that matters in our common life!

I am entrusted to plan the most excellent program we are able to have, and continue to strive to do that. This Spring, the Board smartly proposed that we operate on a budget soundly rooted in what we actually have been able to raise together as a congregation. Per their request, I have put together an RE budget for 2015-2016 that is about 20% less (17K) than this year, because this year's church budget was additionally supported by sources other than our pledges that no longer exist. RE's cut was not as much as a few other ministries.

I believe our interdependence has great power to move through any challenge and I am as excited as ever for the list of things in the works to enhance the RE experience for 2015-2016! I also want you to know directly that some things will change because of the reduction and related factors: there won't be RE for K-5th at the 4:30 service; there will be no more stipends for assistants in Junior High Drama, COA, and Youth Group; I will absorb some of the Director of Junior Youth Ministry work and that position will have fewer hours; we will no longer partially fund some offsite community-building events, snacks, and special guests presentations. Two offerings I had hoped to pursue, an off-site parenting group and a specialized group room that is tailored for children with special needs, aren't funded. The reality is some things may continue with creative ingenuity and extra volunteer gusto, but these are yet unknowns.

Here are things that you can do to make a difference:

*Respond to the recent budget letter by pledging as generously as you are able and please contact Erin Julian if you have questions or need counsel (Ejulian@rochesterunitarian.org). Some may not realize that it takes an average of \$1700 per pledge unit to run First U and all it offers for everyone. (You can pledge through the RE registration link below, if you haven't already.)

*Come to the annual meeting of the congregation during which the budget will be voted on, to be in community together and deepen understanding of our collective priorities. (May 31 at 11:15, RSVP by May 28th to me if you need childcare).

*Send me your feedback about RE in terms of how your children and youth could be best served – what are priorities, ideas, and tweaks you would love to have happen if we make them possible.

***REGISTER your children now here.** With the shift from Saturday and need for more volunteer support for gaps, Marj and I will have more organizational pieces to settle. When families wait to register until mid- September, it makes planning for staffing really tricky!

Thanks so much for your close attention at this busy time of year, and for gentleness in moving forward together-

With you and yours in faith~

Sheila Schuh, DRE

SheilaS@rochesterunitarian.org

743-0425

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FOUNDATIONS

Summary

When serving the First Universalist Church of Syracuse, I met with the RE Committee and did a fun exercise to develop a picture of “The UU Grad” who at 18 yrs. old, would be “the poster child” for our RE program. From this large character sketch we were able to think outside the box and come up with concrete strategies about how to grow such an awesome young adult! The activity marks the beginning of a true and passionate commitment to comprehensive program planning and visioning that I understand to be the religious educator’s primary purpose in UU community life. No other staff or leader holds as much accountability for this function- a task that requires serious reflection and ongoing evaluation and discernment.

UU identity formation continues the stream of living souls, and expresses our faith in the world through our children and youth. Making countless decisions about content, format, method, and staffing that will best instill a sense of UU identity proves to be a great challenge, given the vast diversity inherent in our tradition. Without a grounding mission and vision, that allows those decisions to be tested and tweaked, our children and youth may drift away from the faith as they age up. Teachings and experiences affirming UU Principles and Purposes, a felt sense of attachment to community and rites of passage at multiple ages to support ongoing growth, and an understanding of one’s place in a long history of members, provide a foundation for lifelong UU identity.

Formation

Structured learning experiences

- ~LREDA Fall Con: Theme-Based Ministry, 2015 (Co-lead)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training UU Faith Formation in the 21st Century: Building Beyond Sunday Morning, 2015 (10 hrs.)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: Returning to Ritual, 2014 (10 hrs.)
- ~Theme-Based Ministry in Religious Education. GA, Providence, 2014 (Co-lead)
- ~Renaissance Modules: UU Identity (April, 2004) and UU History (April 2003)

Life experience

- ~Writing multiple Coming of Age curricula, including taking historical trips to Boston
- ~Raising children as Unitarian Universalists
- ~Volunteering as a Coming of Age teacher, prior to my employment
- ~Making distinctly UU gifts for volunteers and families
- ~Writing a novel (unpublished)
- ~Leading Young Adult overnight retreat at Unirondack
- ~Developing a “Sam May” puppet as a teacher in children’s worship at May Memorial

- ~Having religious experiences/ visions
- ~Being the only person in my family of origin who is a Unitarian Universalist
- ~Addressing issues of attachment in foster families as a clinical social worker
- ~Receiving Catholic sacraments and later losing my Catholic faith
- ~Affiliating with schools through sports

Independent study

Identity Development through Inter-Modal Expressive Arts Therapy, Master's thesis
The Waking of Heroic Individuals, Honor's thesis for undergraduate degree

Application and Integration

Responsive Affirmation of UU Principles

A desire to for youth to be able to translate our UU Principles into common language of commitment each week while maintaining respect for and the integrity of carefully chosen wording, resulted in the creation of the Responsive Affirmation of UU Principles. Used in multi-age as well as various youth groups, the statements reflect not what "we believe" but what we aim to do in our relationships. While some may consider repetition and rote response to be too dogmatic, I felt it critical to give our young people a language to describe the covenant of our faith and the expectation of its lived experience in everyday life. Having words that name common experience comprises part of personal and collective identity. In its simplified form, the responses have been used in children's worship with movement.

Unitarian Universalist Principles

All: We covenant to affirm and promote...

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

All: Let us value others and ourselves.

Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;

All: Let us show compassion and be fair.

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth;

All: Let us learn with and accept each other.

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

All: Let us share questions to find what is true.

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process;

All: Let us have a voice and work for the common good.

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

All: Let us make choices that make the world more fair and peaceful.

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

All: Let us respect the web of life that makes us one.

*Responsive version for all ages. Sheila Schuh, 2001

Coming of Age Program Elements

Some key components in the Coming of Age program I have written are foundational in UU identity development because they both engage youth in fun ways and encourage religious growth. Participating in a historical treasure hunt of our church, doing a UU Church Hop retreat, having to give an actual “elevator speech” that sums up one’s basic understanding of what Unitarian Universalism is, and engaging young adult UU grads in a Fireside Chat about their experiences in college and the world, are a few. Going to Boston to learn about our UU roots at the UUA and UUSC, visiting UU churches, and having a ritual on the beach, nurture pride and group affinity. Creating and participating in their Rite of Passage service at the end of the year marks an independent choice to “own” the faith as theirs. Passing on the Flame expresses this passage of faith from their parents to them, in the witness of our faith community.

Congregants have often said that the Coming of Age service is their favorite of the year. Many express gratitude for the work of the RE program and the hope which it inspires in the wider membership for our future.

PASSING ON THE FLAME

May 17, 2015

Sheila: On the journey of growing up, those whom we first turn to for help, and to know that we are not alone, are our parents. I would like to invite the Coming of Age parents forward at this time.

Parents, you too, are Coming of Age today. Your promise to your child in dedicating them in this religious community is, in part, complete. You have, along with our support, tried to provide for them the gift of a liberal religious upbringing. In all that you have done, you have lived as an example of this faith for them- in the way you created your household, the priorities you have set as a family, the experiences you shared with them, the difficult decisions you have made in teaching them UU values all along the way. What courage in the face of an awesome challenge!

So it is most fitting that the real passage to a UU faith of their own and to their later teen years, be marked by you. It is time that they share more fully in the responsibilities of nurturing it.

Teens, when your name is called, please come forward and light a smaller chalice here to symbolize your commitment to continue to grow this light of our faith in your life... To listen deeply to yourself, open to life's many gifts, and to serve needs greater than your own. Don't worry, you are not alone! Your parents have prepared a secret collection of letters from those closest to you to remind you of this and give you wisdom!

As each teen's name is called, I'd ask any relatives, close friends, or RE guides and community members who have been a part of their growing up to stand in witness to your ongoing support. Chris Davis and Wayne Holt have taught them all year... Sharon Glezen has been their OWL teacher since they were just out of elementary school! And mentors, please stand- Shadia McAnnaly, Jim Blake and Suzy Farrell.

Nolan Bell, Maddie Stanberry-Bealle, Kyrill Gill, Corrina Vuillequez, Massey Williams, Becky McQuilken, Marlee Mullane, Rachel Wells, Noelle Schuh

Rev. Marcus: We have a tradition of dedicating babies and young children as they become a part of our faith community, committing ourselves to being the village that it takes to raise them. And at this time in their lives, it is our tradition to recommit, not just to celebrate their accomplishments over the last year, but to remind them that we still have their backs. We also know that teens can make some serious mistakes and that navigating the culture is difficult!, and want to promise to them they will not be forsaken or shunned from this home. As you greet them after the service, I invite you to share your personal blessings and encouragement with them.

So now will you stand as you are able, and join me in recommitting to these youth as they come of age?

Congregation:

We as a community of faith, recognize the work that you have done in Coming of Age this year and pledge to support your ongoing spiritual development.

We take seriously your place in the long stream of Unitarian Universalists who have come through this way, and we commit to support you to continue living mindfully and loving faithfully.

In our interactions with you, we pledge to grow with you in listening to our deepest selves, opening to life's gifts, and serving needs greater than our own.

Rev. Marcus: Finally, we bless you with these chalice necklaces: sign of our living tradition, symbol of our beloved community, and its strength, compassion, and joy so that you will always have a reminder close to your heart that you are forever welcome in this circle.

Amen. May it be so.

Mission/Vision Integration

"It's about living mindfully and loving faithfully!" This short phrase developed with my staff, is a two second capsulated nugget of what we are "after" or aiming for in our RE ministry. Besides me, nobody has memorized the entire mission of the church and our program, UU Principles, and Sources! Having "carry it with you" statements for our mission and the church's mission (Listen, Open, Serve), allows staff, parents, and our congregation to be on the same page in terms of UU identity development. A guiding mission with specific annual outcomes also allows us to assess our program's effectiveness over time.

First Unitarian Church of Rochester Mission:

Creating connection by listening to our deepest selves, opening to life's gifts, and serving needs greater than our own—every day!

Child and Youth Religious Education Ministry Mission:

We help young people listen, open, serve by providing learning experiences that include...

- practical skills and service (promote UU Principles),
- playful adventure and
- countercultural wisdom (drawing on UU Sources)

...so they can live mindfully and love faithfully!

UU Stamps

In this Thinking Cap Lab workshop activity, children explore famous Unitarian Universalist stamps and why our UU ancestors became so notable. The exercise follows a game in which all members of the group have to work together to take steps to end a world crisis, each doing his/her/their part. Children discuss how Humanists believe that the “joining of individuality with interdependence” helps us make other’s lives better and “gives us hope for attaining peace, justice, and opportunity for all.” What parents found fun and meaningful was to see children walking around church with the large stamps, showing how children pictured themselves and what they would someday be notable for as UUs!

GOING DEEPER THROUGH ACTIVITY:

Explain to the children that today they are invited to be part of the following activity to explore the wisdom of the story for themselves more in the Thinking Cap Lab:

Activity 1: Explore the Famous UU Stamps, by having the children choose a name tag that has a stamp in it. If you were this famous UU, I wonder how you tried to change the world? Have the children match the stamp they have to one on the reference sheet of all UU historical stamps and name their famous UU. Use the UU cards or corresponding info sheet to tell them a little bit about how their person kept trying and made a difference!

Activity 2: Make your own UU stamp! Using the heavy stock paper cut like a big stamp, have the children make a stamp of themselves, with a symbol or word that would tell people what they would like to keep trying to do to make the world/ community a better place!

Lenses

Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, Multiculturalism (ARAOMC)

During the Moment of Inquiry last year on Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, I presented a picture of Whitney Young and asked if anyone knew who he was. Many responded quickly that he was King, and upon further examination, guessed he may be King's father. I used this example to teach children about racism and seeing people who are of one race as all the same, or closely related. I also used the experience to awaken in them the understanding that our UU ancestors include people of color who did things we can both be proud of and that call us to continue their work for racial and economic justice.

Technology

During the Mega Mall Challenge in Spiritual Survivor, we added an exercise to have youth use their phones and RE-provided laptops to look up organizations that support fair trade foods, and produce clothing that has not been made in sweat shops. Preparing them to be consumers as Unitarian Universalists in the world has to start young as the influence of other culturally dissonant values also starts very young. Growing Unitarian Universalists in a rapidly changing technological society requires us to help youth practice skills at church that cross over into behaviors and thought processes during the week. We also added an exercise to look up an item you would want to buy or were likely to buy, and assess the purchase from a UU values standpoint!

WORSHIP

Summary

Worship has a unique place in the life of UU community- providing shared experiences of connection, opportunities for insight and spiritual practice, rituals to mark important events, the passing on and sharing of wisdom, and a container for curiosity and wonder. With distinctly UU elements of Source stories, songs, chalice lighting, and reflection on all-church worship themes, worship feeds spiritual and identity development for families. Thus, creating and leading worship with others makes a special kind of relational bond that is different from a purely educational one for religious educators.

Worship has ancient roots in very basic needs for people to make sense of the world around them, celebrate the gifts of their lives, and mark time deliberately so as to be able to collectively honor change. The necessity for worship in our program for children, junior youth, youth, and families also lies in the danger of becoming too individualistic in our searches for truth and meaning, and lacking a balance of collective engagement, celebration, and growth. Worship provides an “entering in” by which we may widen our understanding of our small truths, and be in relationship in ways that our wider culture does not have vehicles for. It serves as a way to reaffirm our covenant weekly and provides face to face connection that supports wholeness in relationship with self, others, and the world.

Formation

Structured learning experiences

- ~LREDA Fall Con: Theme-Based Ministry, and Fall Con Recap Webinar, 2015 (Co-lead)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training- UU Faith Formation in the 21st Century: Building Beyond Sunday Morning, 2015 (10 hrs.)
- ~Mindfulness in Education Teacher Training, 2015 (6 hrs.)
- ~UUA GA: Theme-Based Ministry in Religious Education, Providence, 2014 (Co-lead)
- ~UUA Central Eastern Regional Group, Theme-Based Ministry in Religious Education Webinar, 2014 (Co-lead)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: Returning to Ritual, 2014 (10 hrs.)
- ~UUA GA: Intergenerational worship, Boston, 2003 (Self- Lead)
- ~Renaissance Module in Worship August, 2000

Life experience

- ~Developing rituals for rites of passage: Bridging (12th), Coming of Age (9th), Leap of Faith (5th), Stepping UUp (PreK)
- ~Co-creating holiday worship services with ministers and lay people
- ~Supporting weekly worship creation and centering practices with RE program directors
- ~Building worship services with youth and young adults
- ~Marking special occasions in congregational life: Minister's 10 year celebration, for ex.
- ~Performing a memorial service for a congregant's mother
- ~Creating rituals of gratitude for staff and volunteers
- ~Creating and running UU Home Church
- ~Being a devote Catholic and attending daily worship in later years of high school

Independent study

Existentialism in Literature, 1989

Application and Integration

Solstice Meditations

For the past three years, I have been assigned the responsibility for writing the solstice service meditation. Given I serve a community with multiple ordained ministers, what an honor! Rarely do I have the chance to create and participate in intergenerational worship of such a magnitude (This year we had over 800 in attendance!) What I learned most in 2015 was that I could serve the congregation at a time of turmoil by completely entering the role which I was given - in this case, being the Phoenix who helps others have hope of light returning in the darkness. I could fully set aside my own anxieties, fears, and discouragement, and hold fast to common hope inherent in my role.

Solstice Meditation, 2014

Please get comfortable in your seat, feel your feet on the floor and the earth beneath you, and turn your attention inward for a time of meditation. Let the voice of darkness speak to you in the quiet...

Come, rest in my dark arms and let me hold you.

Close your eyes if you like and disappear, no face to meet, no need to be known or seen.

Rest from all things that tire your eyes and from daylight circumstances that have made you weep.

Let go of harsh divisions. Let details and their responsibilities fade. Let your very emptiness and pain release into my shadows.

Come, hide your tender soul in my peace. Just breathe, flow, and beat.

Remember when you cried and no one was there, I held you. When you hit bottom, I lay with you.

In your deepest fear, I wrapped around you.

I have comforted you at the end of your days And have listened to your dreams.

I've heard the anguished questions you have dared to ask of life And felt the stir of courage to love again.

Before any human being ever set eyes on you I knew you in the womb.

And before there was even a you, I held you in the hope of cells that became you.

Like a crocus from its bulb buried deep, the encased bean, the butterfly from its cocoon, I have birthed you from me with dark ancient oceans in your tears.

With dark breath from the primordial winds in your voice.

And your body, the dark ash of gorgeous stars.

How could you despair for being all alone?

Listen deeply in your bone.

You, my child, are a wondrous creature of the night!

Let us now rest in the dark silence.

May this silence we have shared continue to hold us and heal us through the winter.



The Seven Days of Unity

As a parent, I developed this winter holiday ritual for my own family and offered it in my prior congregation as a choice for parents. The Seven Days honor the seven UU Principles while also marking significant calendar dates that tie into our UU Sources. Chalice was not yet imagined! While we have made some tweaks over the years, the concept and ritual stays strong in our house. Recently a former RE Committee member living in Argentina asked me to send it along as she was looking for something more defined for UUs there, many of whom have Catholic religious roots. I presented this at GA following winning an award for it in intergenerational worship.

THE SEVEN DAYS OF UNITY



This seven-day festival of lights is a celebration of the seven Unitarian Universalist Principles.

Each day is marked by the lighting of a candle from the chalice flame that corresponds to each Principle. The specific calendar dates bear significant meaning in our community and world (The closest Sunday may be used for communities only meeting on Sunday)

Unity is celebrated as the underlying state of relationships that is the result of living out our principles in our relationships with ourselves, with each other, and with the earth/universe, in ever growing depth as discovered through the wisdom of many sources. It is this that gives hope and “light” to the world.

As with any tradition, it is evolving as it is meant to. It is not meant to be a celebration that imitates the religious observances of different faiths. Rather, it is a way to express a relationship to and valuing of the richness of the sources of wisdom that have brought light to the world for centuries.

FIRST DAY OF UNITY: THANKSGIVING

Accepting and growing the best in one another

Activity: Exchange names, request what the other person would like to learn with you and how to affirm them during 7 Days Season. Read the Prayer Before All Things or other indigenous source.

SECOND DAY OF UNITY: BODHI DAY (12/8)

Showing compassion and being fair

Activity: A day/week of reflective meditation on being in someone else's shoes (specific person or group) and doing service action in response. Meta Prayer

THIRD DAY OF UNITY: INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY (12/10)

Making the world more fair and peaceful

Activity: Reading the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Signing international petitions. Recommitting to Family Pledge of Non-Violence. Cross-cultural event.

FOURTH DAY OF UNITY: HANUKKAH

Sharing questions to find what is true and good

Activity: Treasure hunt with small gifts related to a person's curiosity. Circle of Questions- pass candle having each person share questions for their upcoming year. Share Jewish story of wonder oil.

FIFTH DAY OF UNITY: SOLSTICE (12/21)

Caring for the web of life that makes us one

Activity: Reading earth based source celebrating connection with all living things. Giving special nourishment to the animal/plant world. Committing to a practice for the year for deeper connection to earth. Outdoor fun.

SIXTH DAY OF UNITY: CHRISTMAS DAY (12/24)

Valuing worth of all others and ourselves

Activity: Small ornament or gifts, and a song celebrating the value of each person. Share story of Jesus' birth in stable or his teaching.

SEVENTH DAY OF UNITY: NEW YEAR'S DAY (1/1)

Having a voice and working for the common good

Activity: Family or community circle to decide how to celebrate life or address a challenge in a cooperative defined way for the year. Hike together.

Children's Worship Sample

This template (in bold) has been shared in many presentations about theme-based ministry that I have done. Some version of it forms the basic outline of our weekly worship plans for all age groups, Pre-K to Coming of Age. Over the years, the template has grown and changed, most recently with the addition of mindfulness practice, and further defining the content and wording of the reflection time after the story. In all my years of worshipping with children, rarely have I had to stop to address a behavioral issue! We flow quickly through the various elements and engage in all kinds of fun and interesting experiences.

WORSHIP STRUCTURE WITH EXAMPLE

Introduction: Introduce theme of FAITH and today's focus our FAITH and we are going to celebrate how as UUs we totally dig many many ways of being human.

Song: Sing to the Power (children adding verses)

Greeting: Rub shoulders with your VIP neighbors (Have you ever heard the saying "rub shoulders with the rich and famous?" Well at church we believe that every person has lots of richness and is worth knowing, even if they are very different from us! So let's rub shoulders with each other as a sign that we need not think alike to love alike.)

Chalice Lighting: (In ASL) Life is a gift for which we are grateful. We gather together to celebrate the glories and mysteries of this great gift.

Mindfulness Practice: The mental train has left the station in one direction. Ever get your mind stuck on one thing that makes it hard to accept yourself or others? (Oh she is SO ANNOYING! I'm just not good at Math!) And it goes on and on in there like a mouse on a treadmill?! Today we are going to practice using our mindfulness breathing to let those thoughts settle down and stop squirreling around so we can be more caring to ourselves and others. Can you call to mind something you get stuck on? OK here we go!

Running in place saying your phrase. Then chant: breathe in, breathe out. Running in place again. Then chant. Give yourself a hug and say May I be well. May all beings be well.

Moment of Inquiry: Object in a bag. Ask 2 people to feel and decide in their minds what it is. Then ask to reveal their thoughts. Compare with contents? What if x was said? Could both be right or partially right?

Story- Eshu's Two Colored Hat

Perhaps the most famous Yoruba story about Eshu concerns two inseparable friends who swore undying fidelity to one another but neglect to acknowledge Eshu. These two friends work on adjacent fields. One day Eshu walks on the dividing line between their fields, wearing a cap that is black on one side and red on the other. He saunters between the fields, exchanging pleasantries with both men. Afterwards, the two friends got to talking about the man with the cap, and fall to violent quarreling about the color of the man's hat, calling each other blind and crazy. The neighbors gather about, and then Eshu arrives and stops the fight. The friends

explain their disagreement, an Eshu shows them the two-sided hat—all this to chastise the friends for not putting him first in their doings. The lesson of the tale is obvious, but just as interesting is where it places the god. Moving along the seam between two different worldviews, he confuses communication, reveals the ambiguity of knowledge, and plays with perspective.

Drum- Rhythm 3 times, you repeat by clapping.

Reflection- What does the story have to teach or remind us about FAITH, especially as UUs? We need not think alike to love alike. Foolish to think we have all the answers ourselves! The free and responsible search and 6 Sources of wisdom are ever evolving! Don't forget about holy curiosity as part of our faith, especially in conflict!

SAMPLE

SOCIAL JUSTICE THEORY AND PRACTICE

Summary

“Deeds not creeds” has often been used by Unitarian Universalists to describe our faith in a nutshell. What binds us together and what binds us back to our deepest selves, others, and the earth, the *religio* of our religion, is the practice of our values in relationship— perhaps most clearly through social justice work. “Affirming and promoting” our UU Principles means taking the steps, doing the practice, walking the talk and putting flesh on our passionately held ideals. Religious educators not only teach what the faith community stands for, but provide opportunities for children, youth, and families to put their “faith into action.” Without such engagement with the world, religious education does not meet its full potential for liberation and growth.

Changing the world with a conscious act, changes the self. If I want our children and youth to understand and love being Unitarian Universalists, I must nurture a felt sense of its saving power and hope. Otherwise, what would our program offer them but the suffering and dissonance of hypocrisy? From the needs of one’s family to the need for clean water half way across the globe, serving the greater whole affirms the most basic human need to contribute. In a culture full of spiritual disconnection from this need, doing the work of social justice puts our young people in their natural place and inherent belonging as part of the interdependent web of all life.

Formation

Structured learning experiences

- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training- UU Faith Formation in the 21st Century: Building Beyond Sunday Morning, 2015 (10 hrs.)
- ~LREDA Seaway Retreat Workshop: Building Authentic Diversity, 2014
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: Returning to Ritual: The Selma Awakening, 2014 (10 hrs.)
- ~Non-Violent Communication, RE Staff workshop for First Unitarian, 2013 (3 hrs.)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: Finding a Path to Walk the Talk of Justice, 2005 (10 hrs.)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: Skill Building for Making Beloved Community Real, 2013 (10 hrs.)
- ~Creating Beloved Community for All Children, 2011 (1-day seminar)
- ~UUMA Iroquois/LREDA Seaway Training: Effective to Transformative Leadership, 2010
- ~Human Resource Seminar: Non-Harassment, First Unitarian Staff, 2010 (3 hrs.)
- ~Saint Lawrence DA: They’re JUST kids! What can they do? Developing programs for social responsibility in a congregational setting. Buffalo, 2005 (Self-Lead)
- ~Renaissance Module: UU Identity, 2004

~Renaissance Module in Philosophy: April, 1998

Life Experiences

- ~Presenting petitions for environmental justice at Monroe County Court
- ~Volunteering to pack Backpacks at FoodLink
- ~Setting up partnerships with local non-profit organizations for service work
- ~Participating annually in the Greater Good Project
- ~Advocating for education in building authentic diversity
- ~Cooking for St. Joseph's Community Dinners
- ~Creating Souper Sundays and Just Sundays for congregations
- ~Creating "Louder Than Words" social action program
- ~Marching against logo at Cleveland Indians stadium
- ~Advocating for LGBTQIA rights
- ~Incorporating actions in family life and holidays
- ~Attending events for and advocating for indigenous peoples
- ~Partnering with a person of color
- ~Volunteering through various school-based action groups throughout education
- ~Growing up as an ethnic minority in my family system

Notable reading

~Children's Social Consciousness and the Development of Social Responsibility, by Sheldon Berman

Application and Integration

The Greater Good Project

During the winter season, congregants celebrate by giving up 50% of what they may have spent on holiday gifts to needs greater than their own. In the spirit of the biblical call, "And a child shall lead us," children and youth play a significant role in determining which organizations will be the recipient of these Greater Good collected funds. After careful vetting of three or more organizations by the Greater Good Committee and the Board, educational skits and a workshop about values-based consumerism, children and youth head to makeshift booths at church to cast their votes.

As a social justice project, the process engages children in a family based action, counters cultural consumerism, and contributes to local partners who need support to achieve their justice ends. Many children who have grown up with the Greater Good Project as an annual ritual, have a larger sense of what the holidays are all about and serving needs greater than our own.

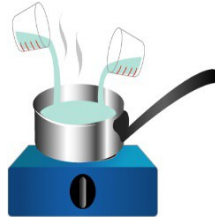
~GREATER GOOD BALLOT~

CIRCLE ONE



RAIHN

Bridges (Fix up day center)



Honduras Partners

(Stoves, safe water, education)



Mercy

(Tech learning tools)

Social Justice Vision

While not yet fully realized, this vision of social justice work in First Unitarian's RE program provides a basic framework program planning. Addressing the need for social justice opportunities and education according to developmental stage, the vision affirms an ongoing institutional commitment to this aspect of spiritual growth. Rev. Scott Taylor and I defined this collaboratively as I felt it important to articulate for both parents and the congregation what the RE program would engage children in and how it would interface with other Social Justice initiatives. My learning in this area has been about the relationship of staff turnover and fiscal constraints for staff time for social justice work, especially in youth group.

LEVEL	DEVELOPMENT NEEDS	FOCUS	NAME	PURPOSE
1-5 th	My family does as practice	Urban engagement	David Williams Project	Connect with needs of city
		Grace in place	Superhero City	Connect with city as home
		Rochester as home		
6-8 th	My church family does as practice	Task Force work of First U	Apprentice Days	Connect church mission
		Church home hub		Connect w leaders
				Humility
9 th	I chose what I love to do as practice	Self-directed/ chosen project	Broken Heart Project	Connect with personal passion
		Myself as home		Link gifts to serving
				Faith is action
9 th -12 th	I lead and inspire collective change	UUA/GA matters of conscience	Youth United	Connect to UU movement
		UUSC initiatives		Connect to wider world
		Home to world		

Honduras Educational Partnership

The Honduras Task Force and I collaborate every year to provide an educational opportunity for both American and Honduran students. Our congregation's children explore a topic which involves a cross-cultural project that is exchanged with Honduran students living in the villages that the Task Force has been empowering for many years. Everything from mask-making to non-violence training to photo journaling has been exchanged, including this sample picture of an English-Spanish parachute project on colors. This past fall one of the Honduran teachers came to have conversations with our children about life there! Children have an opportunity to continue to expand their understanding of global issues of poverty, water scarcity, pollution, and illiteracy through the HTF exchange.



Superhero City

The Superhero City Room gives children in Workshop Adventure (K-5th) not only the ability to take action, but to learn more deeply about social issues. For one rotation a year in January, the room offers social justice education and related skills-building. These sessions have included learning the basics of non-violent communication, bystander responsibilities, American Sign Language, Standing on the Side of Love, and celebrating skin color. A leader of this latter workshop pulled me aside and offered not only his gratitude as a person of color for this education, but said some parents may not be as comfortable in having conversations with their children and teaching them so directly about the oppressive forces in the wider culture.



SAMPLE

WORKSHOP ADVENTURE

Winter 2015-2016

SUPERHERO CITY

INTRODUCTIONS AND WARM UP FUN: Brief fun activity to get to know your group members a little... Apple sort. Take an apple from the basket. Without talking, figure out how to make a line based on the shade of your apple.

Process: How was that for you? Have you ever paid so much attention to color? Today we are going to learn and explore about skin color and how our language about color really matters in helping to make others feel respected. Is one apple better than another? Of course not! Nature has a good way to remind us that variety is normal and beautiful and good!

DEEPER LISTENING TO THE STORY: Review the story very briefly and which wisdom Source it comes from. Ask the children to listen more deeply: What was the most important part of the story for you? Where are you in the story- did you recognize yourself?? What part of is about <RESISTANCE > What does this have to do with race?!

LISTENING CIRCLE: This is our listening chalice. We take two big breaths together to make a quiet circle.

We listen to each person say one thing from their listening inside, and do not interrupt or comment. It can be a celebration or a mourning from your week, or just how you are feeling inside right now... Close the circle by giving voice to what was shared.

SUPERHERO and BEYOND CHURCH ---VISUAL INTRO:

READ The Skin You Live In and have fun talking about it.

HOW DO PEOPLE GET THEIR SKIN COLOR? Skin color is really a characteristic that is handed down from previous generations from a place on the earth, due to sunlight and adaptation. Show Map of the World by Natural Skin Color. So if your ancestors come from a place on the globe, your skin shows that! How cool!

<http://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/genetics/skin-color/modern-human-diversity-skin-color>

GOING DEEPER THROUGH ACTIVITY: Explain to the children that today they are invited to be part of the following activity to explore the wisdom of the story for themselves more in the Superhero City:

Can you try to make your skin color with a partner's help? Take a plate and see if you can put together the paints that match your skin! Everyone is so different!

Process: How was that for you? What did you learn? Does it make ANY sense whatsoever to make any judgments of another person because of his or her skin color? Skin is a most important organ as it protects us all the time!

Show the placard for Black Lives Matter

Ask kids to wonder about what it means? Affirm what they know and explain how certain colors of people have historically gotten treated differently - not good! Some of it continues today in the way some white police officers acted, for example!!!!

Use the heart tattoo and if your partner is willing, show you care about their color by putting it on them! At church we affirm and promote every person's skin color and their worth and dignity.

RECAP:

Back to centering circle for brief sharing. One minute- to review what you did in workshop.

Closing Check out: What are you grateful for from this workshop that you can take with you as you *Listen, Open, Serve Every Day* this week?

SAMPLE

Micro Bead Petition

This petition for changing legislative policy governing the pollution of Lake Ontario with microbeads was signed by over 200 congregants. Children circulated the petition during coffee hour prior to Monroe County Court's hearing on the matter. I happened to have brought the issue to the children's attention in worship and then subsequently found out that the vote was slated to occur in two weeks! While the local measure failed to pass even though our petitions were presented, the measure recently passed in the federal court system. Children had an opportunity to take action on an issue which would affect their local waterways and wildlife. My hope is to do more ad hoc actions like this with children who are passionate about issues at hand. Last time there was a presidential election, our Spiritual Survivors went to the public market to encourage people to register to vote, for example.

September 27. 2015

PETITION

TO The Legislative Assembly of Monroe County, 39 West Main St., Rochester, NY:

WHEREAS microbeads have been shown to pose a serious threat to Monroe County's environment, including Lake Ontario. And, microbeads have been documented to collect harmful pollutants, already present in the environment, and harm fish and other aquatic organisms that form the base of the aquatic food chain,

WE the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Monroe County to please enact the proposed local law entitled, "**Prohibition of the Sale of Personal Care Products Containing Microbeads in Monroe County.**"

Name (printed)	Address (printed)	Signature



SAM