

2002-2003 Staff Annual Reports

Religious Exploration Executive Council

Wendy Salz Johnston, Michelle Levesque, Jana Poirier

In looking over Susanne Intriligator's report to you from last year, we can't help but smile at the optimism and happiness that everyone in the entire religious exploration program experienced back then. We were so excited to be working with a new DRE who held such promise! But what we discovered this year is that our volunteers held the vision and carried it forward without the leadership we had hoped for.

This past year has been a series of obstacles that we have had to overcome. They've been more difficult than the regular issues of juice or attendance sheets, too. It would have been easier on us all if we had a little more time before the next obstacle arose to recover from conquering the one before. Ahh, but we would have missed out on what we discovered was so precious. We would not have come through so victoriously. We would not have grown closer as a group of people who share common objectives and have become friends through the course of accomplishing them. Despite our hardships, we have had fun, laughed and cried with each other, leaned on each other as we nurtured the children of our church through a very rewarding year for them. We have developed, within our congregation, a strong sense of community that revolves around the children.

Way Cool Sunday School – Year One of a Two-Year Transition

At the end of last year, we had re-organized the RE Council and created committees with Chairs to run the many different elements of the new program. We made the commitment to the Board and Congregation at large that we would implement this program in the least abrupt and disruptive manner. We knew that the transition would require so much work that we would not be able to have the entire WAY COOL SUNDAY SCHOOL program up and running the first year. We would have had to overhaul the entire curriculum and how it was presented and taught in only a few short months. That was, despite our desire, impossible. But we could implement the rotational changes, which would be the most obvious for the children. We began each month with a WAY COOL WORSHIP SUNDAY. Children from Kindergarten through grade 6 come together outside under the big white tent to enjoy and participate in a worship service designed just for them. This was followed by two classroom Sundays in which the children split up, according to age to be taught, in smaller groups. Then we ended the month with a WAY COOL SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY. Here is another opportunity for the children to gather together and participate in a meaningful activity and discussion to help a group less fortunate than themselves. We had only completed one full rotation before Susanne left on a maternity leave for two months. But, with a little more effort, the volunteers rallied, continued into the groove and made WAY COOL SUNDAY SCHOOL fly!

Worship Sundays and Susanne's Departure

Now children are accustomed to going outside under the big white tent for their Worship Sundays. The Committee Chair, Erika Valore, and the committee members--Chris Brown, Diane Fletcher-Hoppe, Janet Goodwin, Jeff Greenman, and Jana Poirier--deserve heartfelt congratulations from all of us. They kept this element of the program going, as there was very little leadership or guidance.

Susanne returned in early January. But her hesitation led to a lack of leadership for the Worship Committee, in particular. This had tremendous impact on Worship Sundays and the volunteers. In response to their reiterated cry for leadership, Susanne asked Jana Poirier to move over from her position as RE Chair to help her create and lead Worship. Susanne then asked Wendy Salz Johnston to step up from secretary to the role of RE Chair as Jana moved over. Michelle Levesque then added the responsibilities of Secretary to those of the Treasurer she'd been assuming. It was a difficult time. But we worked together as best we could to help Susanne find her niche in the ministering of the children. She led the WORSHIP SUNDAY in March. It was successful and the children seemed to enjoy it. Granted, there were some bumps along the way, but the result was a great relief. However, Susanne resigned abruptly on March 10th, changing her mind about continuing until the end of June. Despite her departure, the Worship Committee has continued to maintain their success.

Classroom Sundays

The curriculum is the foundation for the WAY COOL SUNDAY SCHOOL program. It is different from any other we've ever used. It uses one of the seven UU Principles as the basis of each lesson, Worship Sunday and Social Justice Sunday. All of these elements are tied together through the curriculum. Due to the overwhelming amount of work to create this new curriculum, Susanne and the RE Council decided last year to take the necessary time this year to do this work well. So this year, we used a regular curriculum in each class. In PreK, Chalice Children and Superfriends, we used "We Are Many, We Are One"; Rainbow Children and Imagineers, Kindergarten and First grade, we used "Treasure Hunting." In Seekers, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades, and Voyagers, 2nd and 3rd grades, we used "We Believe". Explorers, 4th and 5th grades, followed "Travel In Time." Centerquest, grades 5, 6 and 7, and Grow For It, grades 6 and 7, used "Traditions With A Wink."

The Curriculum Committee, chaired by Alicia Van Ooyen, with Anne Saldo, Liza Cranis, and Wendy Salz Johnston working diligently, has spent this past year reviewing each curriculum we have used in the past. Every lesson has been evaluated and associated with one or more UU Principle. Once all curricula have been read and categorized, we will organize all the lessons together by Principle. We will gather other resources for teachers to use to create fun, challenging, and stimulating lessons. We will compile all this into a handbook, designed to give each classroom teacher several different options for each Classroom Sunday, divided age-appropriately.

In the homestretch of this year, we are hoping to hire a consultant who has experience in completing this very task. We do need leadership and expertise in the curriculum area and we have no one in the Church with these skills. To expedite the curriculum development, we will work closely with this person to ensure the results we create will work best for our children.

The curriculum will be completed by the end of June. The Committee aims to distribute copies to all teachers and volunteers to receive feedback on what works and what doesn't. In time for Volunteer Training, August 23rd, the curriculum handbook will be ready, fun, and easy to use!

Social Justice Sundays

Under the untiring leadership of Michele Prichard-Lane, chair of Social Justice Committee, with the never-ending support and enthusiasm of her committee members, Beverly Alison, Cathie Gentile, Donna Perkins-Johnson, Stephanie DuPont, and Linda Van Ligten, the children have experienced the gamut of social responsibilities.

Because of the newness of this aspect of our religious exploration program, we wanted to share with you some of the questions that were posed and some of the actions that were taken in response. Here are some examples:

What happens to the food we donate every Sunday? Westside Food Bank's Bruce Rankin gave a presentation on hunger in our community. They made sack lunches for people at Step Up on Second.

What's UNICEF? This presentation led to the success of the UNICEF Carnival. We gave UNICEF \$1,000!

How does it feel to have plenty when others only have some? This interactive question truly impacted the children, especially those who only had rice to eat. They made GUEST AT OUR TABLE boxes and learned about UUSC.

What is it like to be homeless? After creating 50 "emergency survival kits," children tried to imagine what it would be like to be one of the homeless they see in our community every day.

What makes a good shelter? Teams scavenged for materials to make decent places to sleep. Were they successful? What made it so?

How does it feel to work so hard and not be able to support your family? Holding down two or three jobs and not being able to afford food or clothing for your family is a difficult way to live. What can we do to help?

What does a homeless shelter look like? The first SOCIAL JUSTICE FIELD TRIP answered this question. About 25 children went to Turning Point Transitional Shelter where they made sack lunches for the residents, immersed in their environment.

The overall effect of these Sundays was that the children were empowered to take social responsibility for others within our community. They want to continue to work for social justice!

Nursery

There are 8 children from both services who are registered for the nursery. Lily Ruano, Danielle Dickens, and Carol Frayre (who will be coming back from maternity leave) are the trained child caregivers, who work with paid assistants, Adrienne Silsbee, and Tom Ahern. The children are cared for in a healthy and loving environment while their parents are free to tend to themselves in the sanctuary during the worship services.

Since Susanne's departure, Jana Poirier, and Michelle Levesque have been reviewing and improving the time card policy and its reliability. Under their watchful eyes, the nursery will maintain accurate records and accountability.

Coming of Age (COA)

Four eighth grade girls are well on their way to presenting their COA Worship Service on June 1st. With the support of their advisors, Emmy Laybourne, Robert and Analee Simon, and Jeff Greenman, they have been guided through UU history and the elements of our faith to create their own credos. The group, which was already close before this year started, has developed even stronger bonds.

The YOUTH PROGRAMS COMMITTEE, chaired unofficially by Karen Patch, has been putting together monthly activities for COA and YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) members to gather and have fun. "Youth Groupies" (formerly known as chaperones) are reliably Jana Poirier, Liza Cranis, and Michelle Levesque. Other volunteers and organizers of this committee are the dynamic parents of the children involved – as well as the children themselves! Please recognize Buudha Quant, Linda Marten, Jacki Paddock, Dorothy Steinicke, Emily Hero, Pam Teplitz, Daniel Teplitz, Dawn Figueroa and Jessie Figueroa.

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU)

Chris Brown, Michelle Levesque, and Simon Huss have been casually getting together with last year's COA group, now called YRUU, Daniel Teplitz, Emily Hero, and Chris Marten on Sundays. Sometimes, the advisors have a specific program planned, sometimes not. YRUU is designed by the UUA to be self-run. The kids have occasionally come up with their own ideas and topics, but, as they grow more comfortable with this freedom, they'll be able to take over. They also participate in Area Cons (conferences) in the area with other churches' YRUU programs.

Social Justice issues are becoming a more important focus for YRUU. They went to a soup kitchen one night and helped out there. They created and implemented the entire Haunted House at the UNICEF Carnival. For those of you who had your ankles grabbed, you now know whom to blame! And, yes! It is now a tradition!

One impressive act of one of these kids is taking the church and its membership seriously. Daniel Teplitz became the first YRUU at UCCSM to join the church!

Our Whole Lives Lifespan Sexuality Education (OWL)

Our church has been exemplary in the implementation of our OWL program. We are one of the few churches who have invested in the program in terms of teacher training for all available age groups. Beth Rendeiro, the PSWD District OWL Trainer and our own OWL Support Group Chair, has been a strong advocate of this program. Its success is due, in great part, to her tenacity in seeking funding from the congregation and explaining the vital part of and impact on our children's lives that this program should have.

Currently, we are teaching two elementary school programs, a teen program, and an adult program as we educate and support the parents of the children participating. Beth with Stanley Johnston, Karen Canady, and Carl Hoppe teach the teen program (8th and 9th graders). Sue Bickford and Kevin Pierik teach the parents of these teens to support their children through this experience. Linda Van Ligten, Robert Simon and Victor Paddock along with Beth teach the two elementary programs, one for Kindergarten and 1st graders and another one for 5th and 6th graders. These classes are taught on a rotational basis, so they will be available to your family when you are ready.

We look forward to training the facilitators for the Senior High OWL program, sometime next year, to implement that program the following year.

For your further information, Adult OWL, taught by Cynthia Cottam, Shannon Murphy, Steve Young, Sylvia Young and Achim Jung, is part of the Adult Religious Growth and Learning course offering. It is not part of RE at this time, but it is part of OWL.

We cannot forget the support Beth receives in her work with all these teaching volunteers. The OWL Support Group functions like a fine-tuned machine in organizing teacher planning meetings, parent orientations, schedules, fun events and everything in between. These celebrated volunteers are Lara Davis Del Piccolo, Stephanie DuPont, Judy Federick, and Michael J. Farrar along with Linda Van Ligten. You can tell this is a major time commitment in and of itself. We are privileged to have such dedication and effort devoted to this program. It is well worth it!

Events

With her amazing spontaneity, effervescence, and all-around love of a good party, Lisa Stewart guided this committee consisting of Liza Cranis, Josh Fouts, Jacki Weber, Iris Jue, Karen Payne, Nancy Giordano, and Jerry Patierno to fantastic celebrations

throughout the year! They created the UNICEF Carnival, Christmas Cookie Bake (special thanks to Gretchen and Celia Goetz!!), Holiday Pageant, and the Mystery Pals Exchange and Party to name just a few of those memorable occasions. We'll have a Beach Picnic and Kite Flying before the year is over. Break out the sun block!

Other Items Worth Noting

RE Sunday will be on June 29th this year. You will experience a WAY COOL SUNDAY SCHOOL Worship Sunday presented to you by the children themselves.

Upon Susanne Intriligator's departure on March 10th, Jana Poirier, Michelle Levesque, and Wendy Salz Johnston worked with the Rev. Judith Meyer and assessed all the elements of Susanne's job. We, as the RE Exec Council (with Judith actively involved) decided not to hire an interim DRE. Instead, we distributed the workload among the three of them. These three continue to provide the administrative and organizational support the program needs until the end of this fiscal year.

For the summer, we have hired Liza Cranis to function as the DRE to organize and execute CAMP WAY COOL, the newly created program for children during the summer. She will recruit and organize the volunteers needed as well as supervise each Sunday's events.

At the Board meeting on March 10, the evening Susanne Intriligator resigned, the RE Transition Team was formed to support the RE Council in determining the staffing requirements. At the helm of this committee is the Rev. Judith Meyer. With their work, we ask that you, as a congregation, support the needs of our Religious Exploration program. It will be only with your help that we can afford a full-time leader in this area. We hope that you will realize how incredible our program is and how much greater we want it to become. But, we cannot do it without the proper leadership that we cannot provide our volunteers and children without your help.

Music Director Steve Wight

A year ago I wrote my first report to the congregation. That report dealt mainly with the many changes brought on by my directorship of the music program, including change of repertoire, instrument and choir placement, use of guest musicians, and other items. For the choir, adjusting to my approach to choral music making must have been challenging and at times uncomfortable, as it has very little in common with the approach they had come to know previously.

If our first nine months together was marked by change, I believe the last year has been marked by consolidation of gains. Professional musicians of the highest caliber have become regular participants on Sunday mornings. The choir consistently sings with confidence, purpose, and polish. Musical events such as the Choir Dining for Dollars

night, Christmas Eve services, Children's pageant, Coming of Age service, and the Samoso Woodwind Quintet Family concert featuring Peter and the Wolf have become musical events of the highest caliber.

An important step in this continued growth was the addition of a choir Soprano Section Leader. Angela Meade has done an admirable job of fulfilling the duties of this position, as Michael Lamb has done for some time in the role of Tenor Section Leader. Together with these two fine musicians the entire choir has taken on an intense work ethic and has shown itself to be willing to be challenged to the highest levels of achievement. Within just the last several weeks, for example, they have given masterful, authoritative, moving accounts of music as diverse as a movement from the Faure Requiem, a Russian Orthodox acapella Easter hymn sung in Russian, Gershwin's "Summertime", Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind," and a song from the musical "Sweet Charity."

As always, pianist/organist/composer Louis Durra has performed a wide array of duties with the greatest professionalism. Week in and week out, he performs difficult instrumental and vocal works at the nine o'clock service which he has often not seen prior to 8:30 that morning, then accompanies the choir at 11:00, moves from piano to organ, from Baroque to jazz improvisation, and frequently includes his fine compositions and arrangements. For the recent Dining for Dollars evening, he wrote a wonderful Cole Porter medley for piano, keyboard, string quartet, and an array of soloists. All of these duties he performs with no extra pay and no special fanfare.

In addition to the paid staff, a number of talented church members have regularly volunteered their time and talents. These include Wally Giffen, Christine Mourad, Scott Roewe and others. This has added a dimension to our musical experience that we could never afford to pay for, given the size of the congregation.

When I was hired in 2001, I was told that one of the church's biggest assets was "the best minister in the conference." In the ensuing time, I've come to know the truth of this assertion. Judith Meyer's extreme self-discipline, intelligence, and kindness are self-evident. What many may not know is that it is her reasoned, compassionate leadership that transforms the huge diversity of background and outlook contained within the church from a potential source of turbulence into focused, propulsive energy. Her guidance has been and continues to be invaluable to the formulation of the church's music program.

Given the diversity, which is a hallmark of the church's makeup, it will always be a challenge to create a meaningful musical experience for each congregant. My desire is to continue to find ways to meet this challenge. As I see it, the difficulty is in finding the right height versus width versus depth with regard to musical style. For a group which is not adept in a certain style to give a shallow, stylistically inappropriate performance of a piece just to say we're being diverse is not a virtue, in my opinion. On the other hand, as we move forward, I'd love to see the performing groups and soloists of the church explore and become expert in more and more styles of music. Even more, I'd like to explore ways to incorporate World Musicians of all kinds, gospel groups, Mariachis, and what-have-you into our church experience. If we can broaden our palette of musical

experiences without sacrificing quality and authenticity, we will truly have the music program the church needs and is worthy of.

Church Administrator Marie Kashmer-Stiebing

Reading over my report from last year, I can see that the Church Administrator's job has continued to evolve and grow. During the past year, I was an active participant of the Subcommittee on Committees but withdrew from that committee when invited to attend Personnel Committee meetings as a staff representative. I now attend the following committee meetings, most of which are monthly: Board of Directors, Caring Committee, Finance Committee, Personnel Committee, Administration Committee, and Long-Term Planning.

Working with the Administration, Finance, and Personnel Committees, we hired a 20-hour per week sexton, Kevin Roller.

We ordered, installed, and implemented Church Windows software, and Steven Andrews and I took a one-day overview class. Currently, Steven is using the Contributions and Finance modules, and I have taken on the Payroll and Membership modules. Though time consuming, it is important that both Steven and I learn all of the Church Windows modules so that we can back one another up during vacations and times of illness.

The use of time cards was initiated in January 2003. A time card reporting system helps us to more accurately track vacation, sick leave, bereavement time, personal business, and other absences. We are working with the Personnel Committee to determine how to account for those individuals who do not submit time cards.

Networking of the church calendar to enable staff to check for available space and dates is underway. When completed, all staff members will be able to use the computerized calendar to check dates and room availability. Also, the office assistant and finance and administrative assistant will be able to complete rental agreements and pass them to me for final approval; thereby, freeing time for me to address other administrative duties.

Throughout the year, several projects have been completed through joint efforts.

1. Worked with Ellen Boag to replace the blinds in the offices.
2. Served on an ad hoc committee established by the Executive Committee to determine how the kitchen can be improved to meet desired sanitary conditions and reported the findings to the Building Committee. Some of the ad hoc committee's findings will be incorporated in the Building Committee's plans.
3. Hosted the first office volunteer recognition in over two years, a luncheon. Assisting me were Peggy Butler, Steven Andrews, Alberta Wyluda, George Kashmer, and Susanne Intriligator.
4. A number of forms were revised this year in coordination with changes in Bievenidos, and a new form, the pew card, was created. Originally designed by Kelly Bryan, revisions

to the pew card were made by Pam Teplitz after Kelly moved to Houston.

5. Each long-term renter was contacted to obtain information needed to complete the Case Statement for Facilities Development Program. At the same time, renters were requested to renew their rental agreement and review the guidelines for proper use and securing of the building.

6. Equipment problems arose with copiers, printers, and computers indicating a need to consider new equipment purchases in some cases and upgrading in other cases.

The Administration Committee that was ratified at the last Annual Meeting was joined by Kevin Pierik, a CPA with non-profit experience, a general contractor, and knowledgeable about computers. However, a few months later Kevin resigned when he took a job in Santa Barbara.

Recognizing that the office staff is not sufficient as currently structured, the Administration Committee is considering how this situation might be mitigated. The committee is reviewing current job descriptions and creating a job description for a new 20-hour staff position. Emphasis is on meeting the church's current needs, and those that will arise when a ministerial intern and DRE/MRE join the staff in September 2003.

After discussing whether it is possible, feasible, and desirable to reorganize staff offices to provide privacy and security for staff and church documents, the committee decided to move forward with creating a new office layout. Greg Wood measured the space and prepared a drawing to be reviewed at the Administration Committee meeting in May 2003. The drawing takes into consideration the needs of the nursery, of Sunday volunteers, and of members of the congregation and visitors on Sundays.

A major concern is the lack of a Building and Grounds Committee since Jay Gobus' resignation. It has been necessary for the administrator to take on tasks ordinarily handled by this committee. Please see the Building and Grounds report beginning on page 17 of this book.

Some activities for the coming year are:

1. Participate in recruitment of a Building and Grounds chair and creation of a Building and Grounds Committee to work closely with the Administrator and Building Committee to address the needs of our facilities.
2. A review of our Order of Service, and guidelines for order-of-service announcements and bulletin board postings.
3. Preparation of rental agreement packages for weddings, memorials, and concerts.
4. Meet with church committees and activity groups before the church year begins in September to discuss schedules and needs in order to best achieve our goals

The coming year will present opportunities to work with new staff and new volunteers who, together, will meet the needs and desires of our congregation, friends, and visitors. My gratitude, appreciation, and thanks to all of you who have so graciously and generously volunteered this year. I look forward to continuing to work with you and to building our volunteer ranks.