

RE Council Meeting Minutes
February 19th, 2019

- I. **Attendees:** Mia Noren, Carol Cowan, Eric Keiter, Caline Cone, Benita Terrell (Absent: Desiree Spielmann, Nicia Rae, Wendy Simms-Small)
- II. **Administrative**
 - a. December Minutes Approved
- III. **Discussion Items**
 - a. Preference on agendas, minutes, etc. re: Facebook, email & hard copies
 - i. Portfolio Reports
 - 1. Benita will send reminder one week before meeting.
 - 2. Write report in email if easier, doesn't have to be a doc.
 - 3. Send them to Benita. She will -
 - a. Compile and email them to everyone
 - b. Upload to Facebook
 - c. Include in agenda
 - d. Anyone wanting hard copies should print their own.
 - e. Everyone should read reports before meeting.
 - ii. Minutes
 - 1. Eric will send Minutes to Benita right after meeting.
 - 2. Benita will send them to Council within one week.
 - 3. After approval at next meeting, Benita will upload to website.
 - iii. Agenda
 - 1. Will go out a few days before meeting (depending on how quickly portfolio reports come in)
 - b. Programming
 - i. How is programming changing nationwide and what kind of changes do we want to make here? RE Council should play a role in changes. It's recommended that Council members read the two articles below so we can discuss this.
 - 1. From Winter UU World - <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/better-sunday-school>
 - 2. From UUA regional report called "The Death of Sunday School and the Future of Faith Formation" This report has morphed into a consulting business for the author. Mia have a study guide for the revised version of the report that came out in book form. - https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/the_death_of_sunday_school_and_the_future_of_faith_formation_ksweeney_june2017.pdf .
 - 3. Potentially hire adult childcare staff during youth meetings so that childcare youth don't have choose between the two. Might open up other programs, like Adult RE. Currently no participation for families with young kids.

4. Possible monthly intergenerational service where families attend together, maybe on the fifth Sundays (6x/yr).
 - a. Expose children to service & larger church
 - b. Allow children & adults to connect.
 - c. Mia to talk to James Gilson since his whole family attends.
 - d. Conduct survey – send feedback to Eric

5. Paper Calendars - chiefly for non-FB RE families.
 - a. Available on table at front and
 - b. Have sitting next to sign-in sheets
 - c. Hand families as they sign their children out.
 - d. Emailed out?

- c. Thematic ministry – has led to some good programs, like Potluck Theology.
 - i. Touchstones doesn't have much info for children, so it's hard to write curriculum. Resources are not compiled and it's disorganized. Ministers are not fan, either.
 - ii. Tapestry of Faith is difficult to figure out and time-consuming.
 - iii. Soul Matters might the new program
 1. Katy Covey is involved (wrote Chalice Children) and knows how to write curriculum.
 2. Won't start til September; no summer program
 3. More resources are available.

IV. Portfolio reports

- a. Chair (Benita)
 - i. Concern about Social Hall Plan which puts doors from the hall out to the Wildlife Sanctuary – that kids will be in danger from the street.
 - ii. Benita will follow up with Security team and Steve Phillips to see what can be done.

- b. DRE (Mia)
 - i. Kelsey Atherton is joining the curriculum team; interest in creating Mid-High youth curriculum.
 - ii. Researching Soul Matters as possible curriculum for next year.
 - iii. Hosted appreciation dinner at O'Niell's on Jan 24th.
 - iv. Credentialing portfolio has been submitted.
 - v. Communication Issues
 1. Blog is suspended b/c of very low open rate
 2. Facebook numbers have not increased.
 3. Will now create a monthly calendar/newsletter to be available at the church and emailed to registered families.
 - vi. Current Registration Numbers:
 1. 93 Children and 47 Youth = 140
 2. OWL
 - a. 11 in K-1
 - b. 9 in in 4-5
 - c. 15 in 7-8

- d. Each class has one or two children from outside church community
- e. 7 youth registered in 2019 Coming of Age
- vii. Youth Conferences
 - 1. Mid-High overnight at NM Cluster Congregation cancelled b/c of low enrollment
 - 2. MLK Con in Denver reduced to one overnight and not a possibility for us
 - 3. Workshop & Spirituality Training workshop in Golden, CO cancelled due to low registrations. We had two youth and an advisor ready to go.
 - 4. Next is the Spring Con (fka Bridging Con) in April.
 - 5. Pacific Western Region asked if we could host the 2019 Fall Con here, Declined due to Social Hall construction project. I told them we would like to host the 2020 Fall Con. Usually scheduled in September or October.
- viii. YPC advertisement published. Wage raised to \$13.50/hr for 10 hours.
- ix. Roadrunner Youth would prefer moving monthly date to earlier in the morning
- x. Childcare worker training w/ first aid is on Sat., Feb 23 from 10-1:00.
- c. Camp Discussion (Nicia)
 - i. Soup, Salad & Bread fundraiser raised about \$900
 - ii. Valentines Dinner went well; no numbers yet
 - iii. Carol suggested that things from the Social Hall that might be thrown out could be used by Camp Fundraising team for their donations to Goodwill. Nicia
 - iv. Mia has the contracts for camp and bus company (not signed yet)
 - v. May only get half the dorm b/c another camp group is coming in. This is problematic.
- d. Curriculum (Carol)
 - i. Concern about people who haven't attended recently: Noah Schoeder who has an older brother and younger sister who were also in RE. Mikaela's children and David Wilson
- e. Community (Desiree)
 - i. January Family Night had about 20 people at it. February Family Night fell on same day as Valentine Dinner. Only about 10 people attended, but they weren't likely to have been attendees at the Dinner, so there was no apparent conflict.
- f. OWL (Callie)
 - i. Seems to be going well. Numbers are good.
 - ii. Plan to take out the elementary and youth facilitators out to celebrate.
 - iii. The youth are engaged, and talking with families.
 - iv. **Mia:** OWL is part of what we will talk about when we talk about revamping programming. It's hard to do mid-high OWL at same time as Coming of Age. People must choose. Ideas?
 - 1. Possibly alternate years?
 - 2. Possibly held at different times of years?
 - 3. Talk to people; see what works for them.

V. Other Business

- a. What we want in Associate Minister - Angela has a large workload and needs an assistant. She doesn't see how there will be much time for the Minister to devote to RE.
 - i. RE Council feels the Assistant Minister MUST spend time in RE
 - ii. RE Council needs to have a say in this, without Mia's input. Suggestions should come from church members, not staff.
 - iii. Carol wrote up several ideas that made really clear about how the assistant minister should be involved in RE. (See them under reports)
 - iv. Part of Mia getting credentialed is so she can do family ministry, like Susan does music ministry, etc.
- b. Future dates for RE Council meetings – The next 4 meetings need to have the dates changed. Let's discuss via email.
 - i. March meeting needs to change from the 19th.
 - ii. April meeting falls on Easter
 - iii. May meeting Benita out of town
 - iv. June meeting falls on Father's Day.

VI. Written Reports

Carol's suggestions for what we want in an Assistant Minister

Ministers need to be comfortable working with children and youth! The new assistant minister should be willing to help in RE classes once a month so that the children & youth get to know the minister! The minister could be in a classroom as the teacher or assistant once a month. This means being in every class at least two times in a year. Always introduce yourself and ask the child's name. This makes the child feel important.

Children's chapel was my idea but it does not work the way I envisioned it. With two ministers, the children see each minister 6 times a year. With an intern, the children see each 4 times a year. However, other people now lead children's chapel-- the DRE, the music director. So now, maybe the children see the ministers two times in a year. This is not enough for the children to know or recognize the minister. There is a rotation of many people and the kids really do not interact with one person consistently.

It is a similar situation when the children are in the sanctuary; various people are doing the children's sermon. Do the children know who is speaking to them? Do the children know the minister's identity? Or is it just someone talking? We do introductions in class so that everyone can know one another; the minister needs an introduction each and every time. There are always new children and new families for the minister to get to know. The children do not see any minister consistently enough to recognize the person and that the person is the minister.

Also, it is important for minister the to attend RE events. At an event, the ministers can interact with the children and the parents in a relaxed atmosphere and on a different level. We need to realize that the children, youth, and parents are the denominations future and the ministers need to relate to the families in many ways. There are so many events that a minister could attend: picnics, field day, swimming party, Easter can hunt, teacher holiday, fundraisers for the church camp, Pot Luck theology, label the books for READ WITH ME, animal advocates, movie night or game night. Show up at some events so that the children can see you are interested in them. Are the pizza lunches still

happening with the Youth? Does a minister visit at Church Camp every year? A minister could attend an RE Council meeting and teacher training to show they value the many hours that people put into the RE program. Attending activities where children, youth, and families are present is key to having meaningful relationships. It shows that ministers are paying attention and care about what the children and families are doing.

The puppets were an item that helped the children relate to the minister in a consistent way. However, the puppets make very few appearances. Is the children's time in the sanctuary directed to the children rather than as entertainment for the congregation? Object lessons are a great way to give meaning to the children's sanctuary time.

Does each minister own a children's activity that appeals to children and has been created by that minister? Ron Hersom used this approach when he was here at First UU. He challenged the children to learn different elements of the worship service each month: Children's affirmation, doxology, Go Now in Peace, Gathering Chant, plus others. He had small trinkets that he gave the children when they memorized the month's challenge. Children would approach him in Fellowship to proudly do their rendition.

We were members of a UCC church where the minister conducted pancake races at the Easter breakfast every year. The confirmation classes (similar to Coming of Age) led by the minister. The minister created and attended an after school program with a brown dinner every Wednesday for the children. The minister facilitated Vacation Bible School with volunteer every summer. The minister attended fellowship and often made a point of being with the children.

Quite often, there are two ministers in the sanctuary, one does the meditation, and the other does the sermon. Plus, there is a worship leader. Is it necessary to have three adults to do a one-hour service where everyone pays attention? It would be great if one of the ministers could make an appearance in RE on more than one Sunday a month. Perhaps a minister could serve as hall monitor and greet everyone as they enter the RE building? A visual presence of a minister in RE indicates that RE is a valued part of the First UU ministry.

More intergenerational Services would also be a great addition to the church's programming. The children could have active roles in these services: Chalice lighting, Reade, special music. When the children are in the sanctuary for an entire service, they feel a part of something bigger and get to know more about our denomination. Intergenerational services also give the RE staff a break. The RE Staff is busy almost every Sunday of the year and finding volunteers to serve in classes and on teacher holidays is a very challenging aspect for them. Every week there is a call for volunteers for this Sunday. It would be wonderful to have a more Sundays in a year where there are no volunteers needed!

RE News is always at the bottom of the E--broadsheet. Do people even scroll down to see it? To me, this indicates that RE is not a big priority.

In truth, the ministers need to give a message that what happens in the RE is as important as what happens in the sanctuary. This is the main experience that the children have at First UU. For parent volunteers in RE, this is often the only event that the parents participate in at the church. The minister needs to show up in the building and on the playground to interact with both the children and the parents.

Portfolio Reports

DRE (Mia) DRE – February

1. Kelsey Atherton is joining the curriculum team with an interest in creating mid-hi youth curriculum. I'm researching Soul Matters in hopes that we migrate to that thematic ministry subscription next year.
2. I hosted youth advisors at an appreciation dinner at O'Niell's on January 24th.
3. My credentialing portfolio has been submitted. I'm busy working on the remainder of the materials: there are three long essays, a number of forms, a comprehensive reading list, and three letters of recommendation that form the package due on March 1st.
4. I continue to work on communications issues. I've decided to stop doing the blog; the open rate was very low. Facebook interaction numbers haven't increased much since their change to algorithms for Groups. I'm going to concentrate more on a monthly paper calendar and information sheet, basically a small newsletter, to hand to families that are physically at church. I will also email the materials to registered families.
5. Current registration numbers are 93 children and 47 youth for a total of 140. Our OWL programming registration numbers are 11 in K/1, 9 in 4/5, and 15 in 7/8. Each OWL class has one or two children coming from outside the church community. There are 7 youth registered in this year's Coming of Age class.
6. The Mid-High overnight that the NM Cluster congregations were working on was canceled. There were only 6 youth registrations by our deadline, and we needed 15 to go forward. The MLK Con in Denver was reduced to an overnight and therefore not a possibility for our youth. The Worship and Spirituality Training workshop in Golden, CO was also cancelled due to not enough youth registered. We had two youth and an advisor ready to go. The next opportunity is the Spring Con, formerly known as the Bridging Con, in April. I'm not sure if that will go forward because there is no one in the position of district con organizer.
7. Pacific Western Region asked if we could host the 2019 Fall Con here, and I declined due to the construction project we'll be involved in. I told them that we would like to host the 2020 Fall Con. This is usually scheduled in September or October.
8. The advertisement for the YPC is published. Alymay's resignation is effective February 24. I was able to get a raise for this position to 13.50/hr.
9. I surveyed youth & youth families and the majority would like to move our Youth Roadrunner volunteer opportunity to the earlier morning slot. March's appointment is for 8:00-11:00 am. Roadrunner's new scheduling software is supposed to be up and running by mid-March, and I'll be calling to see if we can get a permanent reservation for the earlier slot.
10. We have finally been able to schedule a child care worker training that includes first aid training. It will take place on Saturday, February 23 from 10-1.

Camp Report (Nicia)

I am unable to attend tonight. The only things to report for camp is that the 1/27 soup lunch went well, bringing in about \$900. Thank you Desiree! The Valentine's Dinner Alana organized on 2/15 was lovely, although I don't have an estimate on how much it made. Our next fundraising events will be in April.

Community Events (Desiree)

January Family Night had about 20 people at it. February Family Night fell on same day as Valentine Dinner. Only about 10 people attended, but they weren't likely to have been attendees at the Dinner, so there wasn't a conflict.

Curriculum (Carol)

PRESENT: Mia Carol, Kathy met on Jan 13 to plan February, 2019.

ABSENT: Alana let Carol know that she could not attend. **Blake and Chas have resigned from the team and from teaching Grades 4&5.**

Our next Curriculum Team meeting is Sunday, February 10 at 12:15 in RE foyer.

FOR EVALUATION PORTFOLIO:

February's REACH (RE planning materials) packet states: "Related themes are attachment & detachment, forgiveness, moving on, the problems that arise from being controlling, and dealing with transitions. **Unfortunately, curricula resources on this topic were very limited.** Because of this lesson plans chosen focus on forgiveness which often requires letting go, which is much different than forgetting."

Note from Mia- My take on Letting Go is going to be embracing growth as we progress through the stages of childhood. Children may remember and identify with letting go of certain things, behaviors, friends, schools, and more as they age. Experiencing loss or the death of pets or other loved ones is also an occasion for learning to let go. Adults may reflect on allowing their children to assume more responsibility as they mature, which could also be thought of as letting go or surrendering. Another important part of letting go that may be appropriate for us to talk about in church is this aspect of forgiveness: very often when we are in a position of needing to forgive and let go of something, it's because we are angry. Many people are afraid of anger and scared to own it or identify it. This could be a valuable idea to work on with the children: acknowledging anger in a safe way that is the precursor to allowing us to begin to forgive.

Carol's opinion on thematic ministry is that we dove in headfirst and did not know what we were getting into. In previous years, only one new curriculum has been written for fall and winter sessions. The curriculum RE will use in the fall of 2019 is to be determined. My recommendation is to take a slower approach to change.

Mia's thoughts on the above (I want to note these here now so that I don't forget what I wanted to say!) Touchstones was sold to us as a menu that we could pick and choose from to easily create Sunday curriculum. It was also not our first choice- Carol and I, who had a chance to review two thematic ministry options, much preferred Soul Matters. In reality, the materials presented in the Touchstones REACH packets are a starting point but have required a lot of work to craft into cohesive lessons that uphold the quality experience we are striving for in our classes.

EVALUATION- Feedback from the teacher training session is in red:

- 1. The lessons are too wordy. There is too much information for children to process.**
 - As a result, I will attempt to use one definition for each lesson.
 - Determine how we will define Surrender (Letting Go)? Please think about this and **come up with a way to define it for each lesson** that will help children to understand the concept. One size does not fit all. If you look at the 2&3 chart, I tried to define the concept differently for each lesson in February.
- 2. Consider the discussion questions for after each story. There are too many discussion questions for the PK-1 class. The children are not interested in the discussion.**

- Insert this into the lessons: Discussion: *Please note that the discussion is meant to be a short segment of the lesson (about 5 minutes). It is not necessary to ask all the questions. If you read the lesson before class, it is easier to use personal judgment as to which questions you want to ask and as to how long the discussion will take. You may want to try inserting some questions into the lesson.*
- 3. **Chuckie made the point that sometimes the lesson needs to be not taught and something that is bothering a child needs to be discussed.**
 - This is a matter of judgment. It needs to be decided by the adults in the classroom. Some topics or trauma may come up that volunteers do not feel competent to handle. If a teacher is uncomfortable with a subject that comes up report it to the DRE.
- 4. **PROJECTS; There was much discussion that worksheets are inappropriate. No written responses or reading should be required in a class that includes children who are PK. The teachers want open-ended projects rather than preprinted sheets.**
 - Activities such as rubber stamping, water color, crayons, markers, colored pencils, cutting with scissors, making play dough, using materials: scissors, writing implements, hole punch, stapler, tape, cookie cutters, simple weaving are age appropriate. Rhymes with hand motions are very age appropriate.
- 5. **For chalice readings.** You may want to repeat readings that can be used for lighting and extinguishing. These can be used each time and memorized by the children. You may want to teach the children's affirmation as the chalice lighting and a simple closing. Such as: Merry Meet, Merry Part and Merry Meet Again. Blessed Be.