

DRE Annual Report 2018
Submitted by Bethany Vaccaro

I feel like we hit the ground running this year and have kept up a steady pace!

At the beginning of the year, in September 2017, we had 36 children registered in our RE program. We currently have 48 children registered, with another 12 or so who sporadically attend and are not currently registered. Our weekly attendance averages about 15-18 children from Nursery through our Junior Youth age group.

We have had 11 congregants volunteer as teachers over the course of the year, with another 6 individuals volunteering to be substitutes.

Serving in my first year as DRE has been a joy and has also been a process of getting to know the world of UU religious education and how it unfolds best in our specific congregation. The broader RE world has been exploring models that differ from the traditional classroom structure. I am finding that this trend is visible in our community as well. We are increasingly acknowledging that kids have different learning styles (not all of which are best served by a traditional classroom lesson model) and we are also seeing that many families are unable to commit to weekly attendance. I have adapted our offerings to view these facts as strengths, not as something to resist.

We are currently experimenting with a one-classroom model, in which all ages come together for RE Worship and then are given options about what activity to participate in (crafts, movement, yoga, story, etc). Another major shift has been to create lesson plans in which each lesson is free-standing, rather than dependent on material that was taught in a previous week. I am noticing that many of our families are only able to come sporadically, but are very appreciative and blessed when they do come. Rather than pressure them to attend more frequently, I have communicated to them that it is okay to come when they can and that we will always be here when they are ready. This has been very well-received, and it is my belief that we need to present our programming as a support to their daily lives, rather than another obligation. As our attendance has picked up as the year has gone on, I believe that becoming more “drop-in friendly” will bear fruit in the long run.

In addition to emphasizing an all-ages approach, we have been moving towards offering more whole-family programming with our Family Meditation Walks and All-Ages Service Projects (such as our recent lunch at Welcome House). This mirrors the commitment of UUCSC staff as a whole to incorporate more multi-generational Worship services and events into our standard congregational life. I believe that giving our children and youth an active role in regular congregational life will reap big rewards not only in faith formation, but in our efforts to attract more families from our community.

I'm excited to see where things will go!