

DRE Report to the Board  
Submitted by Bethany Vaccaro  
September 2018

Dear members of the UUCSC Board,

As I am beginning my second year as DRE, by this point, I have had the chance to look through a lot of photographs from previous years. Although we are just getting started, this year seems to be markedly different than previous years. We have had an explosion of the smallest members of our congregation. In many of the photos from previous years, I see classes of junior and senior youth of around 7 or 8 members, while the younger groups (such as K-4th grade) have around 4 or 5 participants; the photos I've seen from the Nursery show 3 or 4 happy little ones. This year, the distribution of our kids has shifted quite dramatically.

The first week of services, our nursery served 12 children, this past week, 10 children. Our first RE class served 15 children (12 of them belonging specifically to the K-4 age group). We now have one senior youth (9-12<sup>th</sup> grade) and 4 registered junior youth (5-8<sup>th</sup> grade).

Our largest numbers are consistently in the Nursery and the K-4th grade age group. This is potentially changing our staffing needs. After our opening session, it's clear to me that we need to split our younger age groups up to provide an optimal environment for our kids (and teachers!).

Ideally, I'd like to have one classroom for Nursery, one for Pre-k and kindergarten, one for 1st through 4th grade and one for 5-8th. This would require six volunteers each week (not including the two paid Nursery workers). Currently we have three volunteers committed to our first session, which necessitated the use of a one-group model due to our safe congregation standards (requiring two adults per class). Over the next few weeks, I plan to seek for enough substitute volunteers to make it possible to split into at least two groups.

One thing I've heard consistently from our volunteers is to offer shorter time commitments (a current session covers about 3 months). The emphasis in the past has been on providing consistency by staffing each class with the same teachers for a full session. But it's clear to me that to better serve our expanding numbers of little ones, it's worth it to staff our classrooms with subs rather than wait for volunteers to fill an entire session. Any

encouragement from board members towards potential volunteers would be much appreciated!

I firmly believe that these young ones are a vital part of the lifeblood of this congregation. As we work towards creating a program that truly meets them where they are at and welcomes them into this community, they have the potential to reap a lifetime of benefits, as does this congregation. This demographic shift is already bringing growing pains, but I cannot stress how worth it is to see this transition through.

Blessings,

Bethany