DRE Report to the Board

October 2018

Submitted by Bethany Vaccaro

Dear members of the UUCSC Board,

As you’ve been able to witness during the Story for All Ages, RE has been experiencing pretty extreme fluctuations in our attendance numbers. We have vacillated from having around 15 children in our main classroom, down to 4 the following week, then back up to 15 the next week. While this does make some of the planning more challenging, it’s an overall great sign about the way the program is going. We’ve had several families who’ve come to try the program out return again, even if it’s not necessarily on the subsequent weekend.

We’ve also undertaken a few deliberate shifts to emphasize to the children that they are part of the larger congregation, a natural way to grow with the adoption of thematic ministry this year. The projects for our Service Sundays this session are all things to benefit the congregation (blessing mugs for Rev. DL to take on pastoral visits, eye pillows for RE meditation time, etc.). Last weekend when we did the same ritual to find a peace object that the adults were doing upstairs, I made sure the kids knew it was a church-wide experience for the day.

We’re also continuing to add play-based learning approaches to our environment in RE. Since many of our kids get fidgety while sitting in a discussion or lesson, we’ve introduced quiet activity options throughout the main classroom and Activity Room. We have a weaving station and sculpture table set up off to one side so that kids who want tactile experiences can create without having to separate from the group. We’re also building our collection of “finger-play” objects, such as beeswax and “squishies,” for kids to manipulate while listening to stories.

With these shifts, the mentality is that we want to allow kids to follow their own inclinations about how to engage, and that our intentional interactions with them as their RE staff is part of how we all learn together. The teachers, RE committee, and I have discussed how much of our growth comes at the conversational level, in how we choose to direct and re-direct kids through conflicts that arise, for example. When we do so in a way that models a UU-outlook and commitment to our faith principles, it can be more instructive than a traditional lesson.

Thanks for your continued support as we learn and grow!

My best,

Bethany