

October 2019
DRE Report to the Board

Dear Board members,

Yesterday in RE, we welcomed Loren Spears from the Tomaquag Museum in celebration of Indigenous Peoples' Day. Our main RE classroom had 18 children and three parents engaging in storytelling and a round dance. It was important to me that the storytelling about the indigenous culture here in Peacedale/Rhode Island NOT come from me. It was important to me that we NOT just talk about concepts like honoring the land and the full story of history and restorative justice, but that we BE IN the action of doing them. Even committing a part of our RE budget to compensating an educator for this reveals its importance. \

This is fully in line with our emphasis downstairs this year, of living our Principles, of *being in* the action of treating each other as respected and inherently worthy individuals. These are the kind of learning experiences that have life-long impact, and intentionally creating the space for this is a great gift to our community. And from what I can see so far this year, this is increasingly being recognized by families in our wider community, as our numbers continue to grow.

With this growth comes more questions and options for what direction we want to go in. I am presently mulling through a space make-over in our main classroom area, potentially switching our main classroom to the largest of the two rooms. Our circle of kids around the chalice downstairs is quickly becoming thick, and spreading out continually requires us to look at our program with fresh eyes. This would definitely require moving the piano, which is still looking for a home.

That being said, the families who are finding us this year seem to have come commonalities; they are looking for a haven from overly rigid religious dogma and the pressure to subscribe to a specific creed. And they are also looking for a space in which their kids can learn to get in touch with themselves, with their emotions, and with a sense of justice for the larger world. To me, this is truly the essence of spiritual experience, this deep dive into the quietness within and the values-driven engagement with the world without. A community that lives by our UU Principles is precisely the place where this environment should be found. Thus, Rev DL, I, and the RE Committee and I are working this year to bring more education and awareness to the ways that our program philosophy expresses and truly *lives* our UU values.

In another facet of this that you are already familiar with, we are moving forward with working in the skills of Non-Violent Communication. We are running an open-invitation discussion-based group on the last Sunday of every month for our volunteers and parents, where we will work on learning and applying two basic skills from the NVC toolkit. I plan to offer some structured learning experiences for this group as well, with role playing, exercises, and practical applications. The RE Committee has had some discussion about the potential this might hold for more cross-fertilization with other parts of the congregation and opportunities for those who may not yet have visited RE to also get involved. There is certainly a lot of possibilities!

Thanks for your support as we grow into a new congregational year!

With love,
Bethany