**UUCF Religious Education Report**

**March 9th 2021 Board Meeting**

**Religious Education on Sundays:**

We have continued to host weekly R.E. on Zoom every Sunday at 1:00pm and not much has changed from previous months as far as attendance- we average 8-9 children on Zoom. This is the same group of children who participate each week, primarily from the younger ages, though we now have 3 children from the Jr. High group who have been participating. We do not have any online engagement with the teens at this time.

The 3 R.E. teachers, Kami, Sarah and Katie, lead the R.E. Zooms every week, and meet with me and each other via Zoom to coordinate lessons and plan each week’s activities. I am working with Katie in particular to make the activities and lessons more engaging for those who participate as well as working on ways for her to learn and utilize the technology to its full advantage. This is an ongoing process.

**R.E. Committee and Family Engagement:**

There has been significant movement by parents and the R.E. committee with regard to visioning and restructuring the R.E. program and how we approach parent involvement. This movement was both in response to and caused by a pattern of disengagement of our families and youth (particularly when it comes to Jr. High and High school) which manifested into frustration for some of our families. The frustration felt by those families was also in part due to my own lack of effective communication and time availability to work on innovative solutions to the challenges we face.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have experienced a steady decline in engagement from many of our families who had previously been involved in our program (much of which is simply due to the online platform). Prior to the pandemic, R.E. had a visioning workshop, had hired Katie Bodnar as our Youth Coordinator, and was in the process of reinvigorating our teen group- all of which was derailed by online R.E. The disconnection online has exacerbated the already existing issues of connection, engagement, and meaningful participation within our programs. These issues were primarily, though not exclusively, experienced by families with youth in Jr. High and older (as is typical for most congregations).

I am encouraged to report that over the past couple of months, an energetic and dedicated group of parents have stepped up to partner with me in taking significant steps toward rebuilding relationships and establishing organizational structures for a more encompassing R.E. program. We have had multiple in-depth and comprehensive discussions about R.E. and are in the process of conducting a needs assessment survey to all of our families to gain more knowledge about the interests and needs of our R.E. community, and will use that information to structure a more engaging and fulfilling online and in-person program. There are also various parent-led programs in development with many more to come.

There is still a lot of work to do, but I am excited by the positive energy surrounding the R.E. program and believe it could lead to fundamentally positive changes for our future.

Report respectfully submitted by

Rachel White, Director of Religious Education