

Director of Religious Education 2022 Annual Report

Date: June 2, 2022

Job Position: Director of Religious Education

Name of Person Submitting the Report: Joanne Krettek

Background: Because we did not have a local candidate interested this position, I filled in as Interim DRE from September through June. I'm very grateful that long-time member and Welcoming Congregation Committee Chair Brett Maccani will assume the DRE role beginning July 1, 2022.

RE classes this past year were more informal due to having no RE classes for children for almost two years during Covid and questions about whether we might need to take additional breaks during any future outbreaks. In actuality, we wound up returning to online-only services for a few weeks in December and January but were able to offer in-person Sunday services and classes for most of the year.

Unfortunately, many of our middle school age children did not return to Sunday services / classes following our two-year Covid break. We also had a limited number of RE teachers. With Beth La Fleur taking over as Tech Manager, she could no longer serve in the teacher pool. Thank you very much to those teachers who were able to continue teaching throughout the year:

- Tina Eberly
- Lisa Fuller
- Holly Garces
- Joanne Krettek
- Bridget Lorenz (also served as "board mentor" for the DRE)
- Rachel Reed
- Terry Sundstrom

Since Covid continued to be a concern for most of the year, we held classes outdoors as much as possible. We also combined children into one group (mostly elementary school students) and combined the two classrooms into one so we could better space out children when meeting indoors. Most Sunday RE classes consisted of about 3-6 children. Many thanks to beloved child care worker Daphne Martz and Ishmael's mother Holly Garces, who helped with nearly every RE class this year. Many thanks also to Music Director Beth La Fleur for helping children learn songs for the Winter Solstice play and also for the annual Cabaret.

Key Accomplishments from 2021-22 Church Year:

- DRE Joanne Krettek reached out to parents at the beginning of the school year to obtain their feedback on the RE program and the likelihood of their child(ren) participating. Since a few parents mentioned wanting to have their children in the entire service from time-to-time, we asked Rev. Jim McConnell if he could plan one intergenerational service per month, where the children and adults would both actively participate in the service. Rev. Jim's ideas were ingenious. He planned an intergenerational activity for the first Sunday of every month. We planted seeds, made placards and marched for non-violence, explored ethical questions, honored courageous women and spiritual traditions from our ancestors and created various pieces of artwork. I also helped choose the Story for All Ages for several of our services.

- In late July, we held a summer camp for kids, made possible through the volunteer efforts of several BUUF members, including Bridget Lorenz, Beth La Fleur and Joanne Krettek. The entire camp was held outdoors due to Covid.
- We kicked off the school year with a return to the “Blessing of the Backpacks” ceremony over Labor Day weekend and a Water Ceremony the following service. This was followed by the Autumnal Equinox service on September 19th, so we had lots of intergenerational activities in September.
- Our curriculum was homemade and designed to match the theme for services each month, as follows:
 - September/October: Green Sanctuary – built an RE compost bin and raked leaves into it, prepared an area for bulbs and then planted them, transplanted saplings (Green Sanctuary Co-Chair Diane Gibbons played an essential role in planning these activities – thank you, Diane!)
 - November: We created various UU-themed ornaments for our BUUF Christmas tree (bird nests, felt chalices, winter solstice bead ornaments, scrabble ornaments with a UU-theme)
 - December: We rehearsed for and presented our Winter Solstice play for the fellowship. Nearly all fellowship children (even those who did not regularly attend RE classes) participated in the play.
 - January: We met once online to play BUUF BINGO, but due to lack of participation, additional online RE classes were canceled. We did, however, hold a sledding outing hosted by Harvey Johnson (thank you, Harvey!)
 - February: We learned about several UUs who were integral to the Civil Rights movement, including Whitney Young, James Reeb and Viola Liuzzo. We also learned about BUUF member Hunter Leggitt’s role in supporting the movement. He personally knew James Reeb. We also decorated BLM valentines to share with BUUF members.
 - March: We learned about war refugees and climate refugees (to complement Rev. Jim’s service on “Standing on the Side of Love During Wartime)
 - April/May: Green Sanctuary – used composting experimentation kit provided by Diane Gibbons, customized our own containers to collect compost and bring it to BUUF each week, took some nature hikes, and starting planting and making plans for our RE children’s garden

Achievement of Goals for 2021-22 Church Year:

- **Start up a youth group for ages 10-18. Begin year 1 with hosting a monthly social gathering to help create community and let kids have fun together.** This goal was not accomplished. In interviews with parents early in the year, there was not a strong desire for this to happen, and no one stepped up to the role of Youth Group Director.
- **Focus on letting kids have fun together and reconnect as well before choosing a new curriculum. Simple gardening, nature, craft activities (or simply letting them play) during in-person services for those who attend in person.** Achieved. Children who attended during the summer mostly played outdoors with our child care worker, Daphne.

- **Begin an annual RE-led service.** Achieved with the Winter Solstice play in December.
- **Offer 1-3 workshops for adults (Topics on Racial Justice Education, LGBTQ+ Justice education or Personal/Spiritual Growth Workshops).** Achieved. Two Small Group Ministry Circles were established, one that meets the first Monday of the month in person, and one that meets the third Tuesday of the month over Zoom. Each Circle has about 4-6 members, so there is definitely room for more to join. We used the Soul Matters curriculum for the series. Welcoming Congregation Chair Brett Maccani conducted a lightly attended Trans Inclusion workshop in the fall over Zoom. We also offered an “Elder Wisdom” workshop series but not enough participants signed up to move forward.
- **Increase fellowship leadership and attendance of workshops. Find some more volunteers to run or facilitate them.** We are grateful to Brett for leading the Trans Inclusion workshop in the fall. We still need to work on increasing board and membership attendance at workshops.

New Goals for 2022-23 Church Year:

- Conduct a new round of interviews with parents over the summer to obtain their input on the RE curriculum.
- Continue holding an annual RE-led service.
- Conduct the OWL program for BUUF children (K-3 and 4-6 classes). Possibly involve UCC churches and OutCenter youth. *We are fortunate to have had four BUUFers volunteer to facilitate training and/or substitute as needed. New member Liz Goodwin was trained while attending her former UU church and is willing to conduct classes at BUUF. Brett Maccani and Bridget Lorenz are signed up for online training in July, and we are hoping to get Nico Rojas trained in the fall. Joanne Krettek trained OWL with Harvey Johnson about 20 years ago and is willing to serve as a back-up trainer.*
- Reactivate the Change-for-Change program, to be led by Tina Eberly.
- Consider hosting another summer camp for elementary age children, possibly involving other children in the community if our insurance program will allow this.