

## **Growth & Learning Circle Annual Report**

2022-23

The past year has been challenging our **Children and Youth Religious Education Program**. The ups and downs of returning to church has made attendance spotty and finding volunteer teachers difficult. We did, however, forge ahead!

We are grateful for our high school teaching assistants. Thank you to Brianna Monroy, Ellery Johnson, Becca Snouffer, Rafael Reyes and Fiona Mendoza for being present each week and enthusiastically helping out where needed.

Our Spirit Play program was led by Susan Mooney, Mike Pabian and Pam Fodor. We are grateful to their commitment to nurturing our young UUs. Spirit play seeks to engage children in the questions of life within the context of the Unitarian Universalist faith. The program encourages independent thinking through wondering with an adult who does not mediate correct answers but truly wonders with the child. It gives children real choices through freedom within the structure that promotes a sense of community and develops an underlying sense of the spiritual and mysteries of life. Each week stories are presented through active storytelling followed by a “wondering” time that opens up the child’s response to the story. Time is then allowed for the child to work directly with that story, or another, or respond to the story through art materials.

Our older children participated in age- appropriate chapel service that explored the sources of our Unitarian Universalist living tradition including sharing, wondering, meditation time and hands on activities and projects.

Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote seven principles, which we hold as strong values and moral guides. We live out these principles within a “living tradition” of wisdom and spirituality drawn from the following sources: direct experience of mystery and wonder, words and deeds of prophetic people, wisdom from the world's religions, Jewish and Christian teachings, science and reason, and the spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions. These sources were explored through stories and hands on materials.

Senior High Youth Group struggled to find their groove, however, finally decided to meet on Sunday evenings once or twice a month. Megan Griffin, Mike Ferrando and Gemma Guenther were enthusiastic to help provide opportunities for the youth to gather and have fun.

Despite the challenges of the year, we learned a lot and had some fun. We are looking forward to a more robust year in the fall.

On the other hand, our **Adult Programs** have been well attended and enjoyed.

The Men's Group meets monthly to have philosophical discussions and reflections on topics that affect us all. We are grateful for Peter Krouwer's continued leadership of this group.

The Non-Fiction Book Group choose wonderful books and had lively monthly discussions.

Our Buddhist Meditation group met weekly to meditate and read and discuss the book *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* by Thich Nhat Hanh.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Pam Fodor