

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ASHEVILLE

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRIES

EVALUATION  
OF  
LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MINISTRY

Article X of the Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Asheville provides that the Committee on Ministries (COM):

*shall act to strengthen the practice of shared ministries and to promote effective leadership within the church by:*

- 1. Educating committees and the Congregation to enhance their understanding of the nature and scope of shared ministries;*
- 2. Periodically evaluating the shared and professional ministries of the church;*
- 3. Recommending to the Board and Congregation improved ways to define the roles and responsibilities of the church's leadership.*

During the year 2009, the COM conducted an evaluation of our congregation's Lifespan Religious Education ministry. The Committee's work included: a survey of three local congregations from different religious traditions and three large Unitarian Universalist congregations in various parts of the country; an interview with Taryn Strauss, UUCA Director of Religious Education; and a survey of our congregation's Members and Friends; and consultation with our Minister and Director of Religious Education about the Committee's conclusions and recommendations.

Accompanying this report are: (1) the June 4, 2009 report of the COM entitled "A Look at Some Religious Education Programs, (2) information provided to the COM by UUCA Director of Religious Education on May 6, 2009 contained in a report entitled "Your Religious Community and Your Religious Education Program", and (3) a Summary of Responses to UUCA Religious Education Survey

of our congregation conducted by the COM. (All of the additional backup material compiled by the COM in conducting its evaluation of the UUCA Religious Education ministry will be maintained in the UUCA records.)

Based on the information contained in the documents accompanying this report and the independent observations of the members of the COM, the COM has reached the conclusions and respectfully makes the recommendations that follow.

## CONCLUSIONS

- ***General***

It is very important that UUCA offer activities and programs that help Members and Friends search for meaning and truth.

The most meaningful current UUCA activities and programs are (with percentage of survey respondents selecting the program/activity in parentheses)

- Sunday service (88%)
- Children (52%) and Adult (49%) RE Programs
- Social justice activities (47%)
- Covenant groups (34%)

- ***Children and Youth RE Program.***

Survey respondents were very positive about the existing Children and Youth RE Program. Its strong points are (in alphabetical order)

- Broad spectrum of church members who are teachers
- Content and approach of the curriculum
- Dedication and strong leadership of the staff
- Focus on UU principles
- Open exploration of liberal religion
- Peer relations

- ***Adult RE Program.***

The existing Adult RE program is in need of improvement and should have a more prominent presence in UUCA. *Please see specific recommendations below.*

There would be broad participation in Adult RE if scheduling and childcare worked for participants.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

*The nurturance of individual search for meaning is the work of a lifetime. A comprehensive view of Children, Youth, and Adult Religious Education enables this work.*

### **GENERAL**

- Increase allocation of church resources for Children/Youth and Adult RE Programs, especially funding and minister/professional staff involvement

### **CHILDREN AND YOUTH RE PROGRAM**

- Expand RE facilities
- Increase the congregations involvement in Children and Youth RE Program
- Support the work of the Multi-generational Task Force
- Ascertain how to best increase participation of youth in grades 10-12 and implement measures to do so

### **ADULT RE PROGRAM**

- Professionalize leadership and administration of program while maintaining lay involvement in leadership and administration
- Program content improvements
  - Offer Sunday programming in addition to worship services
  - Increase spiritual/religious content of courses
  - Improve substantive depth and rigor of courses

- Programming should
  - Have curriculum determined by a lay committee together with the professional RE staff
  - Have program offering developed and disseminated on a quarterly basis
  - Increase the number of courses taught by ministerial/profession personnel
  - Be funded by a combination of annual budget and registration fees
  - Offer mainly short-term courses (12 weeks or less)
  - Offer more courses and a greater variety of courses
  - Offer courses at a variety of different times of day
  
- Increase availability of childcare

Respectfully submitted,

**UCA COMMITTEE ON MINISTRIES**

Jill Preyer  
David Ray  
Sarah Thach  
Frank Valenti  
Jeanne Warner

Other Committee members who worked on this evaluation, but whose term on the Committee has expired:

Bonnie Habel  
Bruce Larson  
Marianne Newman

December 18, 2009