

2017-2018
Spiritual Growth & Development
Annual Report

Written by the Reverend Cassandra Hartley

Our program offers religious education opportunities for all ages - from toddlers to adults. In the 2017-2018 church year we have 273 registered children and youth who are served by 68 volunteer teachers and assistants, as well as three dedicated staff members: our SGD Assistant Debra Golden, our SGD Coordinator Mark Van Kempen and Assistant Minister for SGD, Rev. Cassandra Hartley. The SGD Committee for 2017-2018 is: Christine Pellar-Kosbar, Michelle Avery-Ferguson, Henrike Florusbosch, Stella Anderson, Debra Golden, Mark Van Kempen and Cassandra Hartley.

The members of our Adult Education Advisory Team are: Charley Burleigh, Bruce Gibb, Bett Weston, Bev Black, Carol Acitelli and Sandy Eyl.

Summer Program

Our 2017 summer SGD session for grades K-5 was “sUUpper Plays.” Many teachers and assistants helped Debra Golden run the program and an average of 38 children participated each week. Highlights included creating “Gnome Homes” and placing them around the property, spending time outdoors, and watching many of our young people bring the educational plays to life with their acting talents.

General Program Updates

We’ve been busy this year! Important events and changes include: the creation of a Safety Task force, an active shooter response training for our teachers led by the Washtenaw County Sheriff’s Office, the revitalization of our SGD committee, the successful implementation of a new volunteer requirement for SGD parents, the creation of a playground renovation plan and timeline, and the complete reorganization of our supply areas.

Children and Youth Church Year

During the church year, we returned to favorite curricula such as: “OWL,” “Building Bridges,” and “Bibleodeon.” Our children and youth also completed many successful fundraisers and social justice projects throughout the year, including: the YRUU service trip, the YRUU apple dumpling sale to support Peace Neighborhood Center, the 7th graders “Rockin’ for the Hungry,” and the 4/5th graders running the Giving Tree to support Alpha House.

Other important highlights included:

- The YRUU group, along with volunteers from the congregation, hosted the very successful “CONtagious.” This gathering brought over 50 youth from across the Heartland district together for a weekend of bonding and learning.
- After many years of holding separate Coming of Age Initiation Ceremonies for men and women, last year the ceremonies were combined into one weekend. This year we continued that process by further combining various rituals and ceremonies that happen within the weekend. This is a change the youth were asking for and it reflects our evolving understanding (and affirmation) of the gender spectrum.

Multigenerational Worship

We are beginning to introduce more stories into the beginning of our worship services, we have done multiple full multigenerational worship services throughout the year (including our Winter Solstice Pageant and New Year’s Day service), we set up a children’s book table with new selections each month that relate to the worship theme, and we continued our “Bringing it Home” publication, which offers ideas for how families can explore the monthly worship theme at home.

Adult Education

As always, our Adult Education Advisory Team offered a wide variety of high-quality classes. We also moved registration and class information online! This has allowed us to improve communications and registration dramatically.

Looking Forward

We have many goals going forward, including:

- Complete the renovation of our playground.
- Revamp our children’s summer program to include more outdoor time and spiritual practices.
- Create a comprehensive communications plan so we can better use social media.
- Continue to update our safety policies/procedures and make alterations to our building to improve security.
- Increase the number of Adult Education classes and offer classes that appeal to all life stages.
- Continue to find ways to improve our multigenerational elements and worship services.