

2020 - 2021  
Spiritual Growth and Development (SGD)  
Annual Report

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Many thanks to our SGD Committee - Stella Anderson, Delphine Benard, Henrike Florusbosch, and Tim Miller.

### **Summary**

Our SGD program this year has experienced significant challenges, like many other programs of the congregation. However, we are still committed to serving the children and families of UUAA during and after the pandemic with high quality classes, events and activities, and at-home family experiences.

### **Challenges in the past year**

Like so many other institutions working with children, our SGD program has been severely hampered by the pandemic. As many events moved to zoom, including public schools classes, many families were increasingly “zoomed out,” and attempted to limit screen activities for their kids. Younger children especially found the online format challenging, and it was difficult for teachers (especially our volunteer teachers) to find ways to engage their kids through a computer screen. So much of our children’s program relies on relationships: between teacher and student, between child and child, and between parent and teacher. We have learned (and are not surprised) that it is difficult to forge significant relationships over an internet connection.

### **Approaching our Challenges**

When we started the SGD year in Fall 2020, we tried something different. We didn’t feel comfortable teaching our regular content

online, so we asked our volunteer teachers to find fun passions and projects, and then invited our families to sign up for any classes that interested their kids and had 40 families sign up. As we moved through the fall, attendance began to drop and we diagnosed the online format as the culprit.

We then shifted our focus to outdoor and at-home activities. Nursery teacher Hanh Bui began outdoor crafts and games for elementary kids, and Nursery Teacher Sanne Krummel began creating themed activity bags that parents could do with their kids at home, (parents reported the children really enjoyed the bags!) At the same time, our Lead Preschool Teacher Erin Dixon kept holding online meetings for any elementary students interested. These kids programs continued until our program year ended in May 2021.

Our middle and high school groups kept a modest online presence. Our high school group, YRUU, met weekly online, and gave kids a place to have fun with each other, even when they couldn't meet in person. YRUU also planned and created a [digital worship service](#). Our middle school kids created a youth group, modeled after YRUU, that began meeting weekly, again with opportunities for kids to connect, have fun, and discuss what is going on in their lives. Though we did not have a high number of participants, we had consistent participation and genuine engagement from the kids involved.

### **Adult SGD**

Our Adult SGD transitioned more smoothly to online spaces. We have had a full offering of classes, including a COVID parenting class, a class on Humanism focused on BIPOC Humanism, Transforming Hearts, a trans-inclusion workshop, and a class about money management. Looking forward, we are excited about offering classes that focus on our 3 vision priority areas for next year.

## **Looking Forward**

SGD is excited to safely move into our re-opening process. We want our kids to gather in community! However, we realize that families face significant challenges and barriers to health; even as vaccines are available to adults and teens, we still are awaiting a vaccine for young children. Our COVID response team will continue to monitor the health situation in our nation and Washtenaw county, and the SGD program will follow their guidance.

We still need to make plans for Fall 2021, and we will be offering our traditional slate of SGD classes, with the intention of meeting in-person. Being flexible will be key, and as the health situation progresses, we know that we may need to meet outside, stay masked, and even possibly go online for some portions of the year. Additionally, we plan to offer additional sessions of certain core classes (mainly OWL and COA), so that students who missed out this past year have opportunities to experience them.

Additionally, we will keep some accommodations made over the past year. We will be offering monthly themed activity bags for families to take home and enjoy. Select classes for older grades will have an online option, and we will explore ways for kids to participate who are not comfortable gathering in person.

We don't know what the next year will bring us, but we will strive to serve our community and the children in it.