

## Children's and Youth Religious Education Committee Annual Report

**February 2020-February 2021**

The Children's and Youth Religious Education (CYRE) Committee is responsible for the development, oversight, and support of curricula and activities for young Friends in preschool through high school. CYRE is also responsible for childcare in the nursery. In addition to supporting the First Day School (FDS) program and two paid staff positions (FDS Coordinator and Childcare Provider), the committee recruits teachers, selects materials, assesses progress, clarifies goals and objectives, oversees a budget, and communicates with the Ministry and Worship Committee. In summary, the CYRE Committee nurtures the spiritual development of children and teens and their families, and works to integrate families and young Friends into the life of the meeting. This past year we have continued holding FDS on Zoom and continued to meet as a committee using Zoom.

Jasmine McKewen continued to be clerk after co-clerk John Hite rotated off the committee last year. Additionally, Herbert Struemper rotated off the committee. We are grateful for John and Herbie's many years of faithful service and appreciate their continued participation in FDS teaching and programming. Jason James and Julie Feickert joined the committee this year. Continuing members are: Simone Kershner, Stacey Sewall, and Laura Young. Kathleen McNeil (FDS Coordinator) serves on the committee as an ex-officio member.

### *First Day School (FDS) program*

We have continued to have participation from families with children ranging in age from 3 to high school during the pandemic. Attendance has been lower and less consistent than it had been in person. Children and teens are grouped into two pods as we navigate these unusual circumstances.

The Lower and Middle Pod have merged and meet as one group at 11am each First Day. Children range in age from three to twelve. The teachers have included Kathleen McNeil, Mark Hulbert, Jasmine McKewen, Carolyn Stuart, Julie Feickert, and Allie Scales. There is usually the attendance of somewhere between one and seven children each week. The merged Lower and Middle Pod have delivered activity packets once or twice a month since the beginning of the summer to families in this group. Children sometimes completed activities independently if they were not able to come to the Zoom session.

Upper Pod, generally those students of high school age. The teachers are John Hite, Leslie Rountree, Simone Kershner and Herbert Struemper. The upper pod students have been meeting at various times as they try to support one another during this unusual time. Right now they are meeting on the second Sunday of the month. Will King and Rufus King presented their CO letters this year, and Henry Schneider has been preparing for his. The teens worked together to organize the alternative gift mart. They raised around \$4,651.50 dollars for designated charities.

The curriculum is composed of four parts:

Bible Studies (January through Easter) which alternates between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In 2020, students studied the Old Testament.

Multicultural Unit: (Sunday after Easter through the end of the school year) We talked about traditions in Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam.

Quakerism (late August until Sunday before Thanksgiving). Students studied Quaker history, testimonies and practices.

Holiday Activities (Sunday after Thanksgiving through first Sunday in January). We continued some holiday traditions during our Zoom meetings. Carolyn Stuart led young Friends in creating cards for Quakers at Carol Woods who are not regular meeting attendees, and for men at Orange Correctional Center who worship with us. They also made ornaments with Leslie Rountree, sang songs with Jasmine McKewen, and made snowflakes with Carolyn Stuart..

Bible Studies (January and February, to be continued until Easter Sunday). Young Friends are currently studying the New Testament.

### *Nursery Care*

Nursery care has been suspended during the pandemic. Stacey Sewall remains in her position and continues to assist with curriculum planning.

### *Collaboration with other Meeting Committees*

CYRE collaborated with the Ministry and Worship and Finance Committees to purchase a separate Zoom account for the use of CYRE meetings and FDS activities.

CYRE has prepared and discussed a statement on racial justice, attached here.

### *Collaboration with Friends outside of our Meeting*

Jasmine McKewen and Julie Feickert participated in conversations on Zoom with FDS teachers around the country through QREC, the Quaker Religious Education Collaborative.

CYRE has been in communication with Durham Friends Meeting to discuss ideas for FDS programming during the pandemic.

### *Building Family Connections*

FDS delivered activity packets to approximately twelve children several times most months between July and now.

Kathleen McNeil hosted a story night once a week on Zoom or with children calling in on the phone. She read an excerpt from Harry Potter each week for several months. We are now hosting a TV night each Tuesday evening from 7:30-8:00pm using Netflix Teleparty. Several families participate each week and are currently watching one episode of the show *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. Former FDS student, Finn James, set up a Minecraft game server for Friends to play together in a virtual environment.

### *Teen Activities*

In addition to coordinating The Alternative Gift Mart, Ian Feickert partnered with alums Sam Leeman Munk and Finn James to create a peaceful gaming server for children and adults to play communally. Conscientious Objector curriculum is impeccably and thoroughly presented each year by Curt Torell, with continual support from John Hite.

*Looking Forward*

We are delighted to have had the continued participation of approximately a dozen families in FDS activities and a stable group of teachers during the past year. We look forward to renewing our connections with more families in the coming year and continuing to build closer relationships among our meeting families in our work of integrating families and children into the lives of the meeting as a whole.

Respectfully submitted by the CYRE committee: Jasmine McKewen (clerk), Kathleen McNeil (FDS Coordinator, ex-officio), Simone Kershner, Stacey Sewall, Jason James, Julie Feickert, and Laura Young