

Children's and Youth Religious Education Committee Annual Report

February 2021-February 2022

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 been holding FDS on Zoom as well as offering an in-person FDS on the playground since July. We continued to meet as a committee using Zoom.

Jasmine McKewen continued to serve as clerk. Jason James, Simone Kershner, and Julie Feickert rotated off the committee. We welcomed Leslie Rountree, Jennifer Leeman, Rob Jones, and Rowena Bowman as new members. Continuing members are: Stacey Sewall and Laura Young. Kathleen McNeil (FDS Coordinator) serves on the committee as an ex-officio member.

First Day School (FDS) program

We 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 during pre-pandemic times but has increased since the reopening of an in-person FDS option. Children and teens have been meeting as one large group and have divided into subgroups depending on the ages and interests of those in attendance. Every week separate options are available in person for teenagers as well as for all ages on Zoom.

The Lower and Middle Pod continue to convene 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, Andrea Wuerth, Carolyn Stuart, Jennifer Leeman, Leslie Rountree, and Julie Feickert. There is usually the attendance of somewhere between two and twelve children each week in person. Consistently, we have two children on zoom.

Upper Pod generally consists of those students of high school age. The teachers are John Hite and Herbert Struemper. Henry Schneider and Sutton King presented their CO letters this year. The teens led the whole FDS to organize the alternative gift mart. They raised around \$5,018.00 dollars for ten 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 2021, students studied the New Testament.

Multicultural Unit: (Sunday after Easter through the end of the school year) We talked about traditions in Judaism, Buddhism, 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 were able to adapt our holiday traditions for the outdoors or Zoom. 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, made a video nativity play, had a game day with Tom Munk, and made bird feeders to welcome the New Year. Additionally, the teens participated in a white elephant gift exchange with John Hite.

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

Nursery Care

Nursery care has been suspended during the pandemic. Stacey Sewall remains in her position and continues to assist with curriculum planning as well as working with little ones on the playground as necessary.

Participation in the Larger Meeting

FDS led a gratitude forum the week of Thanksgiving. Additionally, we had a meeting with attention to graduation for Rufus King, Matilda Chen, and Henry Schneider.

Collaboration with Friends outside of our Meeting

We are looking forward to finishing out this year with a visit from local Unitarian Universalist youth the last week in January. Two friends participated in the QUAIL (program on human sexuality and human relationships) through Durham Friends Meeting.

Building Family Connections

FDS delivered activity packets to approximately twelve children several times during the first half of the year. Kathleen McNeil hosted 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 each week of the show *The Legend of Korra*.

Teen Activities

In addition to coordinating The Alternative Gift Mart, teens continue to participate in 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), Stacey Sewall, Leslie Rountree, Rowena Bowman, Rob Jones, Jennifer Leeman, and Laura Young.