



UNIVERSALIST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF HAVERHILL

“Tip Toe Through a Year in Religious Education,”
a reflection given by Sally Liebermann
on June 9, 2013

Last fall just after we went back to school, we came back to church with our Water Communion. We went back to our classrooms the next week.

We were a bit older and we had some new friends. We went to our classrooms and heard bible stories about Adam and Eve and the first garden. Do you remember that we mixed up the fruit like they did in the garden? We learned about Cain and Abel the first brothers. We learned that they had the first argument. We read about Moses, the baby in the basket. We learned about classroom rules and signed our contracts. We practiced the rules every Sunday, talking about them, acting them out, sometimes we forgot them and our leaders reminded us about them.

When no one was looking, Dan Wilson, Chris Shramko and Marylou Johnson went away for a weekend and learned how to teach O.W.L. classes.

Our Senior Youth met on Sunday evenings and wondered about life and death and how life challenges us sometimes.

We had our ‘All Souls Service’ and heard the story of Freddie the Leaf. We dropped leaves from the choir loft. That same day we ate lunch in the Murray Room, carved pumpkins and lit them in the sanctuary.

While our Junior Youth visited our neighbors at Temple Emanu-El, our children learned the story of Noah and a great flood! We thought of as many animals as we could that went on the ark. Our list was long, taking us two Sundays to almost complete...

Our teens hosted a Youth Conference here with 20 UU friends from other churches. They stayed for a whole weekend and made scarecrows and apple crisp and learned about eating healthy foods. They had candle light worship in the sanctuary late at night and some stayed up all night in the basement dining room while a few of them slept on the big rug and on the floor in Frank’s office.

Just before Thanksgiving, we made Stone Soup but it wasn’t done in time for us to eat it. It smelled delicious and we left it for our neighbors who visit the Drop In Center during the week.

At the Santa Parade, we sold hot chocolate and brownies out in front of the church. Some of us sold things & some of us ate things while we all watched the parade. Some of us saw friends marching and dancing by. After the parade we unloaded tons of food from the Betsy Conte Food Drive out in back of the church. We unloaded the food and then packed it into cars and trucks for food pantries until it was dark!

Our Senior Youth met with their class and their mentors and wondered big thoughts. They were thinking about why they are here and if there is a God and why they go to church and what might be, the meaning of life...

We talked about the birth of Jesus and played with Nativity figures. Some children and some volunteers brought Nativity sets from home. We also learned about Hanukkah, setting up a menorah and playing Dreidel.

On the second Sunday in December, (like we always do now) we went to the basement and made over 120 fleece hats!!! We gave some of these hats to our Community Meal program, some to the Drop In Center and some to our friends at Ruth's House. That same day our Junior Youth went to church across the street and came back for lunch, sharing stories of wonderful music and holiday worship about the Nativity story from a different yet familiar point of view. They heard Reverend Thomas preach and he told them to be loud and proud U.U.'s.

Just a week later, we wore costumes and sang songs and played out the story of Jesus's birth at our Living Nativity. Then during coffee hour, our own Santa came again with books for everyone!

Some of us came to church on Christmas Eve and we sang Silent Night in the dark with candles lit in church. There were lots of Christmas Carols and our teens read passages from the bible that talk about the kings and the angel and a baby born in a stable.

In early January our several of our Middle School youth went to a sleepover at North Andover where they began their OWL program. That same weekend, we held our "Coming of Age" ceremony and heard the Credo statements of our Senior Youth. Sam Clough, Abby Katz, Luke Liebermann, Charlotte Rogers, Emily Hitchcock and Sharlow Hitchcock officially 'graduated' from R.E. classes here at UUCH.

We learned about Martin Luther King Jr. and enjoyed a birthday breakfast celebration in the basement with our neighbors from Calvary Baptist Church across the street. We had eggs and biscuits and grits. Connor and Aidan, and Evan from Calvary played a song and we learned more about Dr. King and friendship and sharing community. Senior Youth from our church and from North Andover had a sleepover here as they kicked off our first ever High School O.W.L. program! The next Sunday Matt Meyer, the drummer, came back to church. After church he led us in a drumming circle and a dance party!

Our middle schoolers went to OWL classes in North Andover while our High Schoolers came to OWL classes here on Sunday nights. It snowed a lot in February, especially on Sunday mornings. One morning we didn't even have R.E. In classes we started to study the 7 U.U. Principles. Our youth group did 30Hour Famine and raised over \$4000-a record for us! \$4000 is a lot of dollars

and for people who live on a dollar a day, that's a lot of days! Jack Lowrey joined the Famine this year and he didn't eat for almost 30 hours. He said it wasn't even that hard!

We started to meet in different groups in R.E. and all of a sudden, we had the library quiet room! Some of us visited that room and enjoyed the books and puzzles there. Our 'Neighboring Faiths' group visited the Mosque Selimiye in Methuen and met with the Imam there. An Imam is a holy man in the Muslim tradition. He told them stories from the Koran and explained how and why Muslim people pray five times a day.

At Easter time, we talked about Jesus some more and talked about how after he died, a lot of people believed that he came back to life. We wondered about that and how it must have been hard for his family and friends when he died, just like it is for any of us when we lose someone we love. On Easter we had our treasure hunt and collected pet foods and jelly beans upstairs. We collected a lot of food for the MSPCA in Methuen.

In April, we planted seeds and made bean collages as we began the celebration of our 7th U.U. Principle, honoring the great web of life. Our youth enjoyed a Pagan worship with Zan and practiced paying attention with intention. We went to Plug Pond and picked up trash-lots of cigarettes and lottery tickets. We didn't take the giant TV on the hillside but we collected 12 big bags of trash when we were done!

We had our Earth Service and threw a ball of yarn around the sanctuary to make a 'web of life'. After church we ate lunch at the Veggie Café, remembering that reducing the amount of meat we eat is an easy and fast way to help our earth and animals stay healthy. It was delicious and there were even chocolate covered strawberries. Rick Baillargeon and MaryLou Johnson, leaders of the Moon Pool Coven, visited our youth group to teach us about Wicca and universal laws.

We wondered about animals and the way they love their friends and family just as people do. We watched "Born to be Wild" and saw lost and lonely animals find new families to take care of them. On Mother's Day we played games and made cards with the older youth.

Both of our OWL groups had sleepovers again to celebrate how much they had learned. Emma's Revolution came to sing at worship, we went back to class and thought about all the fun we had this year. Alex Itasaca and Kate Murphy, both were children of R.E. here, have now graduated from High School. We are so happy for them and glad that they keep in touch with their friends here. After tiptoeing through our year, all of a sudden, it's today!