

# Westside UU Congregation Annual Reports from Staff for the period June 2015 – May 2016

## RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### **ANNUAL REPORT to WSUU Board of Trustees and congregation**

**Submitted by Betsy Lowry, Director of Religious Exploration for Children and Youth**

**May 2016**

This has been a full year in the world of Westside's Religious Exploration ministry! Never a dull moment from last June, which was focused on good byes for Kevin Lawson and Reverend Peg and participating in GA with our youth and a great contingent of WSUU members, to the fall with Reverend Beatrice's arrival, to spring with me preparing for my own departure. In addition to regular RE classes, Coming of Age, and our vibrant youth program, we offered all levels of OWL this year. I filled in as the lead youth advisor for our youth ministry, and became engaged in district youth ministry leadership to address changes needed for youth of color -- a social justice issue for the PNWD.

As we move toward the close of the RE year and I look at the growth we have experienced, I am awed by the courage, resiliency, and loving kindness that is intertwined through our community -- from our little ones to our elders. Being part of the growth of our children and youth is a treat for all of us, and one that I've relished. Seeing our toddlers transition from the Nursery to Story Time class, and from there to our Spirit Play preschool class... seeing our elementary kids take ownership of their learning...seeing our middle schoolers complete a year of intensive OWL, and social justice projects...and seeing our high school youth lead a service they chose to create...these are gems. These experiences are part of what validates and rewards our many contributions and commitments to the life of Westside.

Even with the challenges this year has presented in our congregational life, the dedicated RE volunteers and our many children and youth have continued to show up with mindful presence, energy, and a desire for the best experiences together to unfold. Families continue to commit to programs and events, and to juggle those things into overflowing schedules. And as your DRE, I continue to experience the grace and amazing support of our Westside family -- even while preparing to say some good-byes. This is a powerful community with loving kindness at its core. I am so happy to have been a part of it as your DRE, and I am hopeful that I can remain a part of it as a regular member and volunteer in the future.

### **Activities and accomplishments from June 2015 to May 2016**

- Provided Sunday morning religious education to 150+ children and youth in 8 Sunday classes from infants to high schoolers with over 45 religious exploration teachers and volunteers.
- Offered the Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality education program to 32 children and youth with 11 teachers, for K-1, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades, and junior high. This May, our high schoolers will engage in OWL discussion sessions.
- Focused our curriculum for K-5<sup>th</sup> grades on racial and environmental justice, and developed and implemented a curriculum through the spring semester, drawing on Teaching Tolerance resources.
- Offered Youth Group to high schoolers every week with few exceptions on Sunday evenings with a team of five advisors and the DRE.

- Offered a Coming of Age program from October through March to 7 youth with four dedicated teachers.
- Provided stories, songs, and skits for 52 Times for All Ages with a wonderful story telling team for all of our Sunday services.
- Offered a 2015 summer RE program inclusive of all ages.
- Offered five Chalice Chapels in the Social Hall for all of our elementary and middle school children, focusing on the Duwamish community and local environmental issues.
- Offered five multigenerational services designed by and for all ages, and including cherished rite of passage programs in our UU faith.
- Engaged children and youth in social action activities inside and outside of the church community.
- Offered parent meetings to support sexuality education.
- Maintained a strong RE Council, and our Youth Adult Committee.
- Welcomed and engaged new families throughout the year, and helped them to make connections in our community.
- Continued to manage, clean and organize RE supplies for our many programs and events.
- Engaged in our district and national UU RE community through leadership roles, participation in professional development events, commitment to collaborative district events, and involvement in transformation needed in our district and regional youth ministry programs.

#### **Goals for next year**

- Focus on ensuring that the core elements of our RE programs are strong, as we accommodate growing numbers of children and youth before our support resources have caught up. Core elements include RE offerings on Sunday mornings, high school youth group, Coming of Age, all levels of OWL, a children's choir, Chalice Chapels, multigenerational services, multigenerational events, and an early childhood focus to engage families.
- Engage children and middle and high school youth in more social justice activity.
- Continue to build a strong RE support team of volunteers to grow our capacity.

#### **Committee/group needs, opportunities, wishes**

- Our need: Nurture committed volunteer leadership in support of Westside's RE ministry.
- Our wish: To foster continued inclusiveness of Westside's RE program as an integrated part of the whole community, adequately supported in our operating budget.
- Opportunities: To engage with the community in discerning how we want to grow and how we can align our powerful program with the resources we have to support it.

Please check out the RE Council and the Youth Adult Committee reports to learn more about the specific kinds of activities that have been happening this year! And your questions, input, feedback and ideas are always welcome as we continue this journey in community together.

## MUSIC MINISTRY

**ANNUAL REPORT to WSUU Board of Trustees and congregation**  
**Submitted by Bertram Gulhaugen, Music Director/Choir Conductor**  
**April 26, 2016**  
**Activities and accomplishments from June 2015 to May 2016**

Activities and accomplishments from June 2015 to May 2016

- **Adult Music.** Our volunteer musicians have given of their time and talents in serving our congregation with skill and grace. In addition to our month to month worship service music commitments we are giving an annual end of season concert on May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 4:00. Proceeds to support Environmental Justice.
  - The current vocal ensembles are
    - The Chorale (the largest choir)
    - The Chalice Singers (the small vocal ensemble)
    - The Celebration Singers (leads praise music each month and occasional anthems)
    - The Summer Choir
- **The WSUU Rhythm Section** (John Hansen, Larry Jones, Martin Sherry, and Marion Kee) has been a pleasure to work with both from my standpoint and that of our volunteer musicians. Both John and Larry feel very comfortable working and interacting with our volunteer musicians, the staff, and the congregation.
- **Music Leaders.** Lisa Maynard, and Linda Anderson served as music leaders and they have done an excellent job filling in when John Hansen and Larry aren't scheduled and when I'm unable to do the song leading or attend a service. Lisa, in particular, has stepped up to take the lead on many occasions and she has done excellent work. Linda, Lisa and I work collaboratively to ensure consistent, meaningful worship music throughout the year. Linda will be stepping down temporarily as of the end of April.
- **Music Council:** The Music Council gave invaluable support to the music program by raising funds to purchase music for the Chorale's participation in the Puget Sound Unitarian Universalist Music Festival, assistance managing the annual Chorale Retreat in September, and supporting the ongoing work of our music ministry.
- **Multigenerational/Children and Youth.**
  - **Learning through song.** Betsy and our RE teachers have been introducing Unitarian Universalist songs to children and youth in their classes, and in monthly Chalice Chapels accompanied by a multigenerational group of musicians.
  - **Multigenerational Ukulele Band.** The Ukulele Band has been highly successful having performed for several services and maintained an enthusiastic membership.
- **Other Projects:** I became involved in several projects deepening my involvement with the larger UUA community. I was the G.A. choir director last June, and served on the Russell Lockwood Leadership School faculty in August, I serve as a Trustee at Large on the UU Musicians Network board (UUMN) and am the chair of the UUMN strategic plan taskforce, I served as general

director for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Puget Sound Unitarian Universalist Music Festival in March and will take on that project ongoing (soon to expand to the Pacific Northwest UU Music Festival), and I was a Judge for the UUMN Silliman hymn writing competition in April.

#### Goals for next year

- **Growth.** Our music ministry has settled in nicely over the past 6 years since I've been at Westside and now it's time to encourage growth. Participating in the Westside Music Ministry means much more than making music for each participant's personal enjoyment and education; those who participate offer a valuable service to the congregation by presenting meaningful, enlightening, and effective music during worship services that transcends "entertainment." Members and visitors alike often cite the music as a reason for coming to worship and our commitment to excellence helps the spiritual energy of worship move from the mundane to the transcendent. We offer a wide variety of kinds of music that feeds individuals as well as the community and participation in this ministry is an extremely important way of serving our congregation and the larger community.

#### Opportunities/needs/wishes from the congregation

- Over the years this congregation has committed amazing support for our music program and even through difficult budgetary times, has remained faithful to that commitment. I am deeply grateful for the monetary support but more importantly for the freely given time and talent of our singers and musicians. Beautiful, effective music doesn't just "happen" but requires great effort and a strong commitment on the part of the participants and our musicians have continually stepped up to the plate and served our community admirably.

## CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

**ANNUAL REPORT to WSUU Board of Trustees and congregation**

**Submitted by Shannon Day, Administrator**

**April 26, 2016**

It has been another wonderful year in the office at Westside. In August of 2015 my hours were boosted from 20 to 30 per week. This increase was to help provide time to take on administrative duties that used to be performed by Rev. Peg Morgan. Shortly after the beginning of the fiscal year our bookkeeper left us without notice. Since then I have been acting as our bookkeeper and working an additional 6 hours per week for a total of 36 hours. I am keeping regular office hours of 8:30-4:30 Monday through Thursday, and I attend several meetings each month to support the board and key committees.

This has been a year of change on many fronts. In August we suffered some water damage in the north stairwell due to a storm and spent the next several months in deconstruction/construction mode. There was much coming and going of workers that had to be carefully navigated given that we house a preschool that has very high safety requirements. I am so grateful to Rose Sheppard for handling the bid process and communications with the contractors. The west hallway and stairwells are looking fabulous and we love the new carpet.

**Communications:** I am so very pleased with the launching of our new Communications and Marketing committee, currently led by Nikki Roberg. I look forward to working with this team to keep improving the ways that we communicate with our community. This year I added a section to the back of the Order of Service that highlights upcoming events. It has been well received. We changed eNews to a “responsive” template so that it looks and acts better on all sorts of screens from phones to desktops. We are looking to change our website to a new platform that will be much more modern and user friendly – stay tuned! We are also trying to use our Facebook page more to let you know what’s happening so if you haven’t already, please “like” our Westside UU Congregation Facebook Page.

**Rentals:** Sweetpea Preschool expanded in September to include three preschool classrooms and a kindergarten. They are using the stage and entire social hall, and two lower level classrooms during the weekdays and transforming it back into a blank slate for us each Friday. They have had much transition in staff this year but we are working well together and are very pleased that they will continue to share our building for at least the next two school years.

In addition to Sweetpea Preschool, we had the following rentals this year:

- Two AA groups
- One OA group (this rental ended in February)

- Mankind Project, a men's group – new this year (this rental ended in March)
- 3 Puppy Training Class series
- 4 recitals
- 3 Birthday Events
- 1 concert/fundraiser
- 1 craft fair

We have also booked a Wedding/Reception for March of 2017.

**Volunteers:** I benefit from, and delight in, our office volunteers and continue to have need for more help in the office. Thank you to Joan Whitley, Marie Kaz, Patty Campbell, and Kathryn Davis for many hours of cheerful service.

**Technology:** I am 'very grateful to Cliff Houlihan, who continues to help keep our computers protected and updated and is our first-line trouble-shooter when problems arise. Cliff also troubleshoots all alarm issues and saves us from costly visits from the alarm service team.

**Security:** We have taken steps to tighten our building security following the burglary of our Fireside Room TV in September. I am grateful to the building committee, specifically John Monahan for the work he did to get our exterior doors re-keyed and install a second key box by the north parking lot door. We have passed out very few new exterior door keys and are having leaders use our key boxes to enter. We have improved exterior lighting and have very careful practices of checking the doors and windows before locking up for the day.

Looking forward to another year with all of you.

In loving community,

Shannon