

WELLINGTON FAITH EDUCATION
2011 Fall Report to Congregation
January 29th, 2012

Members of the Faith Education Committee include the Faith Education Coordinator Kristan Schmidt, Youth Minister Alli Baker, Faith Education outgoing Chair Amy Green, the incoming Chair Karin Alfaro, Nursery Coordinator Teresa Doubet King, Co-Music Director Chris Inserra, Sue Pierson, Nathan Huber, and Charlie Gunne. Thank you to Karin for accepting the Chair position, committing your time and your unique gifts to this work!

2 Congregation Members joined a subcommittee of Faith Ed, the Faith Formation subcommittee, Craig Mousin and Deb Derylak, to help us further and more specifically define the curriculum, events and experiences children will engage in at different age levels. This committee will present the **Faith Formation Document** in early March or April of the 2012 year.

Kristan, Chris, and Alli attend Worship committee meetings to bring the voices and ideas of the Faith Ed Committee and our children and youth into the conversation on worship. We also rotate attending the Liturgist workshops to review and brainstorm the ways we can involve children and youth into service.

We have a **training for all nursery and church school teachers and volunteers scheduled for Sunday, February 19th after service in the dining room.**

Debra Inserra Mousin has moved from the church school group to the Youth Group. We also have her friend, Sarah, who has joined the Youth group, and Isobel Soric-Purkins has joined the nursery. We have had several people visit the program, but we have not lost or gained any children in the church school group.

Currently the nursery is in the East classroom, church school is in the small room in the West classroom (previously the nursery), and the Youth Group is in the loft upstairs. Our space is likely to change this year based on whether or not the Little Geniuses or another program begins to use the East and West classroom space. We are in need of better equipment and furniture for both programs, but we will wait until we know what the contract with incoming building users will provide or allow us to share. A "need's list" will be going out once we know more.

Church School Report Fall 2011

The Church School program each Sunday has between 2 and 8 children. Kristan, Brenda Amy taught most Sundays this fall. Four special guests were part the HERO curriculum outlined below. The guests included Mary Tarullo, Elaine Klemen, Gerald Paoli, and Chris Inserra. Thank you to each of our guests who have shared with our children, the way each of them are doing God's work in the world, following in the footsteps of previous biblical and modern day heroes. Thank you also to Brenda Friedman and Debra Inserra-Mousin who also taught and worked with the children to start a mural based on the Hero curriculum.

The children have been involved in several special services and Chris Inserra frequently works to bring children into the service with their unique musical talents. Thank you Chris!

As well, the children were part of the retreat and shared their work from the retreat at the church school kick off service in September. And, of course, the children were all involved in the pageant, as well as other Advent services. This year even our youngest members from the nursery participated in the Advent processional.

The children have all received their own brand new Adventure Bible this year, and we have started working the BIBLE BASICS curriculum into their lessons.

1. Our main curriculum these past 4 months has been our FOLLOW IN MY FOOTSTEPS or hero programming. This programming celebrated individuals who have said YES TO GOD AND KNOW HOW TO LOVE.....HEROES THRU THE AGES.

Each week we paired one person of courage from the Bible with one modern day prophet and one compatible hero from our own Wellington community.

Examples of these pairings and Wellington guest examples are-

John the Baptist/Gandhi/Gerald Paoli.....simplicity and peace
Ruth/Mother Theresa/Mary Tarullo.....charity and kindness
St. Peter/Nelson Mandela/Elaine Klemen.....courage and determination
Mary Magdalen/Dorothy Day/Chris Inserra.....transformation and hospitality
Abraham/St. Francis of Assisi.....sacrifice

We made a huge 'HERO' wall that is being finished up to hang in the Social Room.

2. The children's programming for the retreat this year was focused around ways of communicating to Wellington children 100 years from now. . They will take these future children on a little tour of what their 2011 Wellington Community is doing in order to pass on a natural, beautiful, peaceful, and just world for them to live.

3. Our 2nd big art project was the introduction and beginning work on our Modern Day Prophet Mural project led by Brenda Friedman. The children has hands on instruction on how to draw the human hand and face in order to start putting our followers of Jesus onto our huge multi-layered canvas.

4. For Wellington Way the children did their own little take off on Occupy Chicago titled Occupy Faith Ed.

5. The children participated often whether singing, reading, and or liturgical dance in the upstairs church services. Changes were made at the beginning of the year to have children start downstairs on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month.

6. The end of September we had to re-create a nursery space as the JCC left.

7. The Christmas Pageant rounded out the 2011 Fall Semester Activities, combining the teen Youth Group and children in a production that focused on the classic Charlie Brown Christmas Special and how we often get caught up in the "bling" of Christmas and forget to keep our focus on the "real" meaning of Christmas.

Spring Plans/Goals 2012

Karin Alfaro will take over as Faith Education Coordinator and our next Faith Education Committee meeting will take place on **Sunday, February 26th after service.**

Goals of this Spring are to work on ways to grow our program, creating a Faith Formation Document and brochure to share with interested families, creating a plan for reaching out to new families, updating the Faith Education section of our website, and updating our spaces to make them more inviting, more functional, and spaces that show we are invested in our children and youth. We also want to better our children's bible knowledge and work on creating experiences and opportunities that allow them to practice their faith in action and to socialize with one another.

We have met during the fall to help transition the new chair, Karin Alfaro, and to set goals, and plans for the upcoming year. Kristan has put together a calendar for the spring (attached) and has secured many more church school teachers. They will be using the UCC Gather Round Curriculum, and their new Bibles to incorporate the age appropriate Bible Basics curriculum. The first Sunday of each month the older children will be pulled out by Amy Green to work on specific Level II Bible Basics. Kristan is also planning a trip to the Albany Park Theatre project for March 10th. The play is entitled HOMELAND...." With its characteristic humanity, creativity, and optimism, the award-winning APTP ensemble brings to vivid theatrical life these stories of desire, risk, resilience, heroism, love, and hope – as immigrant families strive to stay together and make a better life in the land they've come to call home." The children will also be involved in the Earth Day, Mother's Day, and Graduate/Church School End of the year Services this Spring.

The children will start downstairs the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month, joining communion on the 1st Sundays. They will start downstairs the 2nd and 4th Sundays to have more time to focus on curriculum. Brenda will still lead work on a community mural on select Sundays and plans to involve the congregation in this work during the spring, as well.

Nursery Program Highlights Fall 2011

Our nursery program has grown this year and each Sunday we have anywhere from 2 to 8 children showing up. We have more in the 3-5 year old group and have started programming for them!

On a sad note, due to budget cuts, we have had to let Pa Hicks, Vicente Perez, and Dana Parillo officially go. Pa worked for over 10 years in the nursery, Vicente 5 years, and Dana less than 6 months. We are keeping one paid staff member, Teresa Doubet-King and Sally Doubet-King has offered to coordinate signing up 2 volunteers each Sunday to cover the child care needs in the nursery, and being a back up, as well. Thank you Sally!

The Nursery Program has evolved this year with the addition of two new nursery teachers - Teresa Doubet King and Dana Parillo. Both have worked together to rethink the program to include an educational lesson revolving around a story from the Bible or an age appropriate moral and behavioral issue, a related craft project, a movement

activity, a song or story, and structured free-time each Sunday. The responsibility for creating weekly curriculum is evenly divided.

We do have a set of Nursery Safety Rules developed by Liz Chase Vivas and agreed upon by the committee. They are working wonderfully!

Highlights of curriculum already explored in the classroom:

-Paper Chain of Kindness: the children pulled paper strips out of a basket with either kind or unkind actions written on them. The words were discussed. If the word was an unkind action, they were allowed to tear the strip into pieces, and if the word was a kind action, they were encouraged to decorate the strip. All kind paper strips were combined into a paper chain and hung in the classroom to encourage respectful behavior towards each other.

-Alphabet Yoga: the class exercised body and mind through 26 yoga poses, each corresponding to a letter in the alphabet.

-The Prodigal Son: the class explored the importance of home and family through a hand-drawn, age-appropriate version of the Bible story, followed by discussion about forgiveness and love.

-Songs: the class enjoyed musical expression through songs such as "Baby Bumblebee," "Make New Friends" and many popular Christmas carols.

-Christmas Bingo: the class explored the story of Christmas and learned important Advent words through the playing of hand-made Christmas Bingo with colorful visual aids.

-Coloring Pages: individual coloring sheets were provided with images for the children to decorate that correspond with the educational theme of the day.

Nursery Ideas for the Spring 2012

The nursery will continue to strive towards creating fun, educational, age-appropriate, and balanced curriculum, and a safe, respectful, and joyful environment. Future activities we want to include:

-More varied movement activities: continuing with more yoga and possibly exploring dance.

-Making song-time more interactive for the children by providing small, handheld instruments such as bells, tambourines, hand drums, and maracas, to encourage individual creativity while making music as a group.

-Incorporate more stories and lessons from the Bible into our educational curriculum to foster more learning about what religion and Christianity is, and to explore how morals and lessons from the Bible can translate into our everyday lives.

- We do plan to involve the nursery group in worship through music and movement and to include them in the Christmas Pageant this year!

Youth Group Report 2011

1. Worship: We began the year with a worship service—a celebration of new beginnings! Together, the teens and I read scriptures about various “beginnings.” Each of them represented a fresh start, a second chance.
2. Discussion and Reflection: In the weeks to follow, we engaged in a series called “Real talk.” Based on a phrase I had seen on several of the teen’s facebook pages, we discussed what it meant and whether or not they were in fact “keepin’ it real” when they posted music such as Lil Wayne, whose lyrics are often misogynist and homophobic. *Do your posts reflect who you are and what you’re about?*
3. Games: We like to play games. Sometimes, they’re just for fun. But sometimes, they have a point. Like take a game of “Thanksgiving: Would you rather?” With questions like, *would you rather wash your hair with mashed potatoes or have to take a bath in gravy? OR would you rather be a pilgrim at the “first thanksgiving” or a Native American?* Uh oh, made you think! Now it’s time to talk again...

Goals for the remainder of the year include:

- Helping the youth find *meaningful* ways to engage in the greater life of the church (worship, fundraising, collective action, etc.)
- Strengthening cross-generational relationships
- Connecting youth with other clusters within the CMA through collaborative events and service projects
- Preparing for an eco-justice mission trip
- Continuing to wrestle with issues of identity, family, and community
- More *intentional* faith development!