Date: May 17, 2019

Subject: RE Planning

As of July, the current Religious Education program at FUSW will be winding down, since Tracy is moving on and the few member families with children in Sunday School are withdrawing from FUSW. Nor will there be a youth group, because all but one of the current youth will either age out or withdraw and there are no known replacements.

The RE program has been grappling with the problems connected with very small numbers of children in Sunday School, usually at most six children each Sunday, not all the same age. This makes it impossible to run Sunday School using age-grouped classes and curricula and attempted solutions this year have not been effective. This is not a new problem, even for FUSW, but it’s been surprising how quickly we have gone from a thriving Sunday School program with over seventy children to where we are right now.

In light if this, the FUSW Transition Steering Committee appointed Nancy Eisenman, Paul Gross, and John Scheuneman to consider the current state of Religious Education, especially Sunday School, at FUSW. They met briefly before the service on May 12 to begin their work. This memo reports their initial considerations.

One of our first chores will be to find out what (if anything) the UUA tells its small congregations about how to run an RE program. We also need advice from Tracy about any administrative details that must currently be observed for Sunday School. We are aware of the Safe and Sacred policies, but are there others? (Added in proof: Tracy has told us about her practices.) What about policing our tenant? (Experience shows that daycare tenants tend to usurp Sunday School space.)

Surveys have shown that the congregation thinks RE is important, but the outgoing RE Committee did not feel congregational support. In the apparent absence of any RE program, they are leaving. In response, we had a very preliminary discussion about a possible

One-Room Sunday School

along the following lines:

* Children present at the beginning of each service, as in the past
* A “check in” for children and teachers in the classroom
* A simple program to avoid a heavy preparation burden for volunteer teachers
* Important topics perhaps not covered much in school during the week these days
* Attention to fun for all concerned
* Chosen topics may include projects in music, art, or craft, as well as more abstract ones such as ethics, meditation, life, the divine, etc.
* A simple, brief handout describing the RE program and its schedule.

As mentioned, it is important to know whatever we can about UUA offerings and advice for very small RE programs. Tracy has been asked about this and so has John Cavallero, our previous DRE. They did not know about any such advice, so it appears that we will be attempting a do-it-yourself RE program. The three us are pleased to be working together on this effort and intend to have an RE program ready by September.

Presented respectfully by John Scheuneman