



June 2017 Report to the Board of Trustees  
First Unitarian Society of Westchester  
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The 2016 – 2017 RE calendar, class schedules and FUSW curriculum maps are listed online, and you are welcome to view them at any time. [Click here](#)

### **Highlights of Work Over the Past Month**

Funding for summer childcare during the worship service has been restored. I will include a note about this in the weekly Scoop so families know it is available. The RE team is currently brainstorming places to advertise our worship services for families in the surrounding community and will be happy to collaborate with the person or team working on publicity for congregational events and services.

Some of the families in Julia's class let me know that starting in the worship service before RE was proving a challenge. We switched to having the children go directly to RE class and that seems to work better for some of them. We tried having the children start in the worship service every Sunday this year to offer them shortened, more manageable time in the worship service. With this feedback from the families, though, we adjusted the schedule.

Julia's class was consistently the best attended class and it grew over the year. On average, she had 8-9 children each Sunday. Some Sundays she had 5-6, others she had 11-12. A consistent teaching presence in that class and the expertise Julia brings seem to be a significant benefit.

The COA youth led a beautiful worship service May 6<sup>th</sup>. Youth led worship takes a lot of planning and rehearsing but the effort is worth it for the youth to learn more about worship, to experience leading worship, and for the wonderful feedback they get from the congregation.

We held the RE volunteer appreciation brunch May 11<sup>th</sup>. Attendance and meal contributions were lower this year, but it was good to celebrate and thank those who participated.

Last weekend, the COA class went to Boston. They joined the Mt. Kisco COA class for the trip, which worked well. The youth seemed to enjoy having a bigger group of youth to interact with and it helped that they had the two COA retreats to get to know each other before the trip. Going on the trip together made managing expenses a bigger job since the two classes were different sizes and we had to calculate expenses separately for each congregation. Jen Rohr was a big help reviewing the budget and expense sheet. I submitted reimbursement requests to both congregations at the same time so each could see how the expenses were divided. We came in under budget, which is always nice. After all trip expenses are reimbursed, I'll go through the COA line and see if it is possible to reimburse the families. Jen Rohr, Denise Woodin and I were the adult chaperons from Hastings and six COA youth went on the trip.

I am finding that families and youth are increasingly comfortable reaching out to me for support and care. It is rewarding to be present to our families in this way and I appreciate the trust it reflects.

In service to our denomination, I continue serving as a [LREDA Continental](#) (Liberal Religious Educator's Association) Good Officer and supported two colleagues in the past month. I also serve on the Nominating Committee for the Metro NY LREDA Chapter. At the recent annual meeting of the Metro NY LREDA Chapter, I stepped down as Convener for the NY/CT LREDA Cluster, a role I held for the past four years.

## Next Year Planning

I have been working on the 2017-2018 schedule, choosing curriculum and updating the RE curriculum map so RE can begin recruiting. The RE team meets next week so I will have a tentative 2017-2018 schedule and registration list for that planning discussion. The RE team is also planning a summer retreat and will invite RE parents to participate in part of the day so we can hear about their needs for the coming year.

It has already been difficult to find volunteers. We have been looking for a RE co-chair to partner with Jen Rohr on a two year rotation model of co-chairing, but everyone we approached has declined. We are scheduled to offer JR OWL next year and reached out to the OWL facilitators, most of whom have said they are not available next year.

Regarding OWL next year, we have a group of five boys who will be eligible for JR OWL but only one attends regularly. We may need to suggest he visit another Westchester congregation for OWL. The RE team is exploring the possibility of offering OWL on a Friday night or Sunday afternoon, and opening it up to youth in the community. This changes the nature of OWL a bit and I am reaching out to other religious educators to find out how their experience has been if they offered it this way. Without a full team of OWL facilitators next year, though, we would not be able to offer OWL at all.

This past April, I led a Mt. Kisco youth service learning trip to Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Some families at Hastings have expressed interest in a similar trip next year. I am beginning conversations to gauge broader interest and explore how that might work at Hastings. It is a significant undertaking to plan for and participate in a trip like this so it is meaningful, rather than tourism. If there is sufficient interest and support, we will explore the possibility.

There has been a request from one family to reinstate Children's Chapel. John used to lead a very short Chapel before RE classes. I found it challenging to create a chapel experience in 10-15 minutes and it always felt like we were rushing off to RE class. This past year, as noted above, we tried a model that had the children begin in the worship service for the initial rituals in a multigenerational setting. There are advantages and challenges to both approaches. I will check in with the children's families over the summer to see how others feel and am willing to revisit the idea of leading Children's Chapel, though I would approach it differently.

I have also been working with local UU congregations and the region to set the 2017-2018 youth schedule for shared events.

## Upcoming Schedule

June 11 - 12, I was in Ocean Grove, NJ for the annual meeting of the Metro NY Chapter of LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association), my professional association.

June 20 - 25, I am attending General Assembly in New Orleans along with the continental LREDA annual meeting, Good Officer training and Professional Day programming

Per my contract, during the month of July and August, I am not expected to work a set number of hours but will do work necessary to prepare for the coming year, not to exceed the part-time schedule. This helps balance out the workload during the worship year. I will be available this summer except during the following:

- July 2 - 15, I will be in Thailand on vacation, which means I will miss the July Board meeting;
- August 13 - 16, I will attend RE Week at the Sea in Ocean Grove, NJ and participate in the module on leading service trips with youth.