

Director of Religious Exploration AGM Report

THE FUTURE OF UCE DEPENDS ON FAMILIES/KIDS/YOUTH ATTENDING.

Major Actions of 2017-18

- Created permanent paid positions for one youth advisor and one RE assistant.
- Implemented new program structure for re kids and youth group
- Significant effort put into youth group's spiritual growth via events, gatherings and activities.
- Monthly staff meetings with Westwood's minister and DRE as well as Brian.

***Please refer to RE Committee AGM report for further information.

Summary of the school year(s):

2016/2017 vs 2017/2018

In regards to my experience of this year (only actually working 20hrs) vs. last school year (working 40-paid for 20), there are serious differences in the quality of the program.

Examples:

-I do not have time to "market" this program to parents and newcomers via FB, email, in person, etc. As you can see from the increase in FB traffic lately, using that medium of communication works.

-I do not have time to maintain and edit/add to the RE/youth pages on the UCE website

-I do not have time for continuous email communications with parents for updates

-I do not have time to create "take home" information for the kids/youth to discuss or further their exploration into the topic

-I do not have time to plan events. We need events to get people in and help families stay connected.

-I do not have time for professional development, which is of utmost importance.

-I do not have time for monthly DRE video meetings with the regional DREs.

-Using the basic curriculum workbooks we have is not ideal. The lessons are not great and I believe the kids/youth feel the difference. The youth advisors have reported that the sessions seem stale. Without having the time to make the sessions tailored to OUR kids, they miss out. As directed by the board, I am just printing from the books and sending that session onto the teachers. A few times, I have taken Brian's sermon for them to read and discuss. Again, this is not ideal for the youth. As there was no current First Nations curriculum. I had to create it on my own, which means more than 20 hours a week.

-Attendance numbers have dropped. I believe that is because of the items I listed above. Registered kids/youth is down to 28. The middle aged kids just don't come mostly. Only one at a time it seems. If we don't have a third volunteer, that class gets bumped to the younger class. They hate this which they have expressed and everyone is aware of.

Program issues/problems:

1. volunteer support

There are a handful of volunteers in the RE program. If more people do not volunteer to take a turn in the classroom, we will have to pay teachers to do so and/or the few volunteers we have will burn out. Without volunteers or paid staff, this program does not function.

https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/the_death_of_sunday_school_and_the_future_of_faith_formation_ksweeney_june2017.pdf

2. pay equity

As a social justice issue, UCE must do a better job of equal pay for the DRE and other staff. For example, the DRE in Calgary makes \$23.47 an hour. UCE pays \$18 an hour for our DRE. A better job must be done for pay equity. The UUA and CUC have guidelines for fair pay scales available. I have made the board aware of this problem and they have been in discussion around it for over a year. Discussions around this issue MUST be ongoing and within the entire congregation. A definite plan for this is needed now. Few people will be willing or able to work for low pay and we(UCE) should not ask them to do so.

3. hours for DRE

If the congregation wants a vibrant RE program, the hours for the DRE must be increased. Ultimately, this should be a 30-40 hour a week position depending on job description. Please refer to options listed below as to different program structures.

4. Professional development funds for DRE and RE staff

The DRE and RE staff needs professional development funds budgeted every year. This money would go towards attending conferences, additional safety/educational trainings, books, etc. There are ongoing changes within this education system and further/ongoing learning is extremely important to the health of the program. Calgary gives \$2500 just for its DRE. UCE covered expenses for Fall gathering (last two years) and a leadership retreat. UCE does not have an allocated amount for professional development for the DRE. Going to the LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association) conference would be beneficial as trainings are offered there. Safety/educational trainings for the additional staff need to be put into place.

Recommendations for Board/Congregational Consideration:

Program options

Option 1(best):

DRE is a full time(40hrs) a week with proper pay (minimum of \$23 an hour)

With DRE professional development funds (enough to attend CUC and LREDA conferences plus additional)

One staff member & one volunteer for each classroom with professional development funds for conferences and training.

Working toward LIFESPAN learning program with the addition of one part time assistant in the future to help with extra load of adult RE.

Option 2.

DRE is 30hrs a week with proper pay (minimum of \$23 an hour)
With DRE professional development funds (enough to attend CUC and LREDA conferences plus additional)
One staff member & one volunteer for each classroom with professional development funds for conferences and training.

Option 3.

DRE is 20hrs a week with proper pay (minimum of \$23 an hour)
With DRE professional development funds (enough to attend CUC and LREDA conferences plus additional)
One staff member & one volunteer for each classroom with professional development funds for conferences and training.

Option 4.

DRE is 10hrs (includes Sunday hours) a week with proper pay (minimum of \$23 an hour)
Paid staff member(s) for youth group.
No children's program just youth plus childcare/nursery.

Option 5.

No DRE, just Child care coordinator for 5hrs a week.
Paid staff person(s) for childcare/nursery.

Summary of thoughts:

I realize that this information may be overwhelming to sort through and may feel like a burden. As I am leaving in the summer, I feel obligated to continue to be the advocate for this job position and this program. I believe that unless you have worked/volunteered within the RE program, you may not realize its ongoing difficulties. I know that if the congregation makes something a priority, change and action happens. The issues I have listed above, must be resolved or at least be given a committed plan of action. The board, the RE committee and I have made some changes. However, the serious issue of pay and hours has not been resolved.

My intention with this report is to make sure that EVERYONE in the congregation has all the information regarding this program, good and bad. I know that UCE's passion for social justice will guide the congregation to create better policies for our RE program.

I love this community and this program. I hope that the all the hard work and changes I have made continue to grow and enrich the children/youth and families here. I appreciate the support from everyone in the congregation. I wish the next DRE much success and hope the program grows and blossoms under their love and hard work.

Without the families and kids in our community, UCE will be gone eventually. If we do not provide programs, activities, enriched learning and worship for them, they will drift away. Let's make UCE the best place for families!

Submitted by: Lauren Kay, Director of Religious Exploration (2016-2018)