

NOTES: April 26th Meeting: Religious Exploration & Support for Children, Youth, Teens, and Young Families.

The meeting was called by Peggy Kannenstine, Brooke Beard, and Peg Brightman, as a means of moving forward with the Planning Committee's request for action in support of Children and Young Families.

Peggy K and Peg B. co-chaired the meeting, while Brooke Beard offered support and helped to document responses. Others present were: Joan Haley, Luis Bongo, Geraldine Fowler, Ben Fox, Hope Yeager, Ultan Doyle, Jessica Stout, and Daniel Jantos.

Peggy Kannenstine gave a brief overview of the Planning Committee's process, which had yielded a number of "good ideas" and creative proposals in support of RE, children, teens, and young families. Hope Yeager began to list several of these on the large paper. Rather than list them all, we promised all attendees that we would forward these specific proposals to everyone. Peggy noted that Michael Zsoldas is interested in starting a children's choir. The group expressed support for this.

We asked those present what particular needs of youth, children, teens and young families they felt were most crucial. We agreed to send out some questions to families, and try to get responses from the teens and pre-teens themselves. *We need to follow through on this.*

Daniel wondered whether there was a need to recognize a "coming of age" or a "Rite of Passage" for our young people, as they matured. Joan Haley described her concern that the church offer something of interest for her boys who were moving into their teens.

I. COMING OF AGE Ben Fox proposed that he might offer a "VISION QUEST" -- a project which he has offered before to teens -- an opportunity to meet together (monthly or bi-monthly) and discuss issues and challenges, culminating in the group going off into the woods together for several days... a Rite of Passage. Joan Haley offered to collaborate with Ben Fox in setting up and leading such a course for our own youth. The entire group expressed strong support for this possibility.

- II. **CTWK for Middle Schoolers.** Geraldine Fowler reported that Phyllis of CTWK had offered to do something with the middle schoolers, which would relate to community service and sustainability (like a junior CTWK). This could be offered perhaps once a month. Those present were in strong support of this option, designed specifically for middle school youth, whose needs we can't currently meet. Geraldine will follow up with Phyllis and investigate further.
- III. **Offering the OWL program at North Chapel.** Ultan Doyle has been a co-teacher for this program, and he offered to be in touch with Sparrow Alden of Norwich to see what age group she is teaching the OWL course currently. Ultan will investigate whether he and Sparrow are trained to teach the same age levels; if not, NUCS proposes to cover the cost of training, so that we can offer the OWL program here. He will report back to the group.

- IV. Michael Zsoldas has expressed a desire to create and lead a children's choir. Although he wasn't able to attend this meeting, the group expressed their full support of this initiative and we look forward to a future exploration of possibilities.

QUESTIONS:

- 1) Shall we offer RE explorations for our church youth only, or should we open it up to others? We seem to agree that we would like to open our offerings to others.
- 2) Do we need a certified RE director? Yes! Part time to begin with, moving to Half time, and later to Full Time. Peggy K has already written to the Board, requesting training for Geraldine, who is interested in being certified. Our group will look into funding options.
- 3) How do we deal with different RE age groups? Jessica Stout volunteered to help out with teaching one age group. Might there be any from the Amazing Grays who might like to mentor, or read to kids one Sunday a month?
- 4) Cost of these programs? This will need investigation. Our core group can forward proposals to the Board.

Moving Forward: the group has agreed to move forward on several fronts: CTWK for Middle Schoolers (one Sunday per month); a teen offering related to "Vision Quest" once a week; a third Sunday per month could relate to Tapestry of Faith; Jessica Stout volunteered to help out with teaching one age group. The OWL program, once two instructors are found, can meet at another time. The formation of a Children's Choir, directed by Michael Zsoldas.

We agreed it would be better to meet more than three times a year; perhaps once a month? THIS NEEDS ACTION. We will set a meeting soon.

Thanks to all who have participated, and shared their energy, insights, and enthusiasm!

Best,

Peg Brightman, Peggy Kannenstine, Brooke Beard
RE Support Group "Steering Cte."