

Religious Education 2023-2024 – Lyn Bradeen

The Religious Education committee, which includes **Lyn Bradeen** as chair, our coordinator of Religious Education, **Leigh Baltzer**, and also committee members **Robyn Charam**, **Gayla Godby** and **Rev Steph** — met regularly during the year, accomplishing much. Leigh was also supported this year by **Sean DeNapoli** and **Molly Stevens** as RE assistants and **Nola Carney** as an RE assistant in training.

“Sunday Adventures” was structured with children given age appropriate classes. The younger group (ages 3-5) and the older group (ages 6-10) both enjoyed the UUA Soul Matters program which explored different themes throughout the year. The themes of the Soul Matters 2023/2024 program included:

2023-2024 Themes

September: Welcome

October: Heritage

November: Generosity

December: Mystery

January: Liberating Love

February: Justice & Equality

March: Transformation

April: Interdependence

May: Pluralism

June: Renewal

This year, we were blessed with many new families with young children finding our Sunday Adventures program and participating regularly. We have three new families with children under five years old that have been attending church on a regular basis. We even resurrected the nursery to accommodate the families with toddlers. With a great team effort of adults, parents, and teenage RE assistants, we are able to offer something for everyone. And, no surprise, the children gave so much back to us from their Time for All Ages participation to their building of a foundation for the church at our Pledge Drive event.

In late fall, we started making preparations for the Christmas Pageant. This year the RE committee decided to re-use the panels we made last year of the main pageant scenes, with cut out face holes for the children to pop their faces into. “We”/ Rev Steph re-worked the script with the approach that we were baking a Pageant Cake, so we were baking a cake and made sure all the ingredients (aka, all the characters of the Nativity Story) were included. The children had the opportunity to stick their faces in each character’s “face place.” Sam and Rev Steph narrated the Christmas Story while the kids acted out the parts by standing behind the panels and placing their faces in the characters’ openings.

The Christmas Pageant was performed on December 10th, and was enjoyed by all.

This year, we also continued our tradition of helping pack nourishment for the Food Pantry. This is a wonderful opportunity for all ages to contribute to building the community around us. We are grateful for this opportunity to give back. Giving of ourselves is its own gift, and we are grateful for the chance to come together and share resources with those in need.

In March, Mary Collins and Robyn Charam generously provided over 150 stuffed eggs for the kids to find. Mary also shared juice and treats for the children's enjoyment. (Thank you, Mary and Robyn — we couldn't do the Easter Egg Hunt without you!)

In April, Ardith Wieworka organized another visit from the New England Wildlife Center. Jack Banagis came to Cushing Hall with various animals, birds, and exotic reptiles. He taught the children about each of the animals and why they needed help healing and recuperating in the Wildlife Center. The children were able to touch some of the animals at the end of the presentation. This was the second year Jack visited our church, and it was another smashing success.

In late May, the children helped the adults replace the flags at High Street Cemetery. As we write this report, we are hoping for a warm, sunny day and a wonderful turnout. In the past years, lots of dedicated families and children participated to replace the old flags with new ones, and we expect a big turnout this year as well.

The last part of our report is announcing that the RE committee has decided to continue using Soul Matters for our RE curriculum for the 2024-2025 year. The 2024-2025 themes will explore:

September: Invitation

October: Deep Listening

November: Repair

December: Presence

January: Story

February: Inclusion

March: Trust

April: Joy

May: Imagination

June: Freedom

At our final Sunday service on June 16th, we will hold our annual Flower Communion. We hope you have a good summer! See you next year!