

Chestnut Hill Friends Monthly Meeting Religious Education Annual Report 2017-18

Religious Education oversees three combination classes of First Day School: the nursery and the nurturing of the meeting's children. This past year was full and active.

Highlights

Curriculum: Our theme for the second year running was 'Let Your Life Speak: Making a Difference.' Each month was devoted to a different topic (the environment, diversity, spirit, beauty, etc.,) with lessons involving art and nature projects, Bible stories, Quaker studies, and contemporary activism – explorations into making a difference in the world and how we can manifest this in our own lives. A versatile construct was used, adaptable to many methods of teaching and appropriate for all ages.

Family Meeting for Worship: We held two family meetings for worship this year. Each had a guest leader and 40-60 people attended. Enthusiastic participation by the children and adults was heartening. We are still experimenting with ways to help the younger children understand and enter Quaker ways of worship.

Activities: The now-annual Valentine's Day Family Breakfast, Movie Night, a Talent Show, and the end of school year picnic/fair were enthusiastically received and attended by families and members.

Summer School: We wish to express special gratitude for the many meeting members who rose to the opportunity to teach a Sunday

during the summer. This continues to be an excellent way to introduce or reconnect adults with the younger members of our community, and both parties seemed to enjoy the outcome.

Classes: There were more than 50 children enrolled in First Day school. An average of 20-30 attend on any given Sunday.

Nursery: Claudia Vesterby is in her fourth year as the leader in the nursery, with assistant Lilly Basgall during the school year, and Anna Nordlof and Lilly Basgall assisting during the summer.

The children are infants to five-year-olds, with an average of 2-4 children attending of a Sunday. Claudia, et al, seek to provide a warm atmosphere in which the children feel safe and nurtured.

Kindergarten through 3rd grade: For the Fall semester Tricia Walmsley, a wonderful story-teller, leads the children in lessons about the Quaker testimonies and bible stories. She used games and crafts, songs and plays, all chosen with a spiritual or moral lesson so the children may learn to find their place in the world. She was assisted regularly by Cyane Gresham and Grace Moses, whose kind and intelligent guidance and thoughtful snacks developed a devoted following among the children. Grace Moses was ever available to teach the class, and added music and fun group activities.

During the Spring semester Diane Dunning led the class, teaching mostly about Quaker testimonies using games, arts and crafts, and outdoor activities. She was assisted by Cyane, Grace, Kerry Strom, Amey Huchins, Miriam Schaffer, Debby Carr, and others. Lily Brandt-Moses assisted in the class during the Spring.

Fourth through 6th grade: In the Fall Meg Mitchell followed the curriculum with Bible lessons, spirituality, and Quaker practice embedded in the activities. She led meetings for worship for business and the children were quite engaged for these meetings.

Carla White taught in the Spring. As the children tended to be active she chose to do some science projects and outdoor activities to keep the children engaged. She also continued the popular tradition of making cascarones for Easter. Sarah Sharp led a class based on her travels in the Near East. Daria Brandt-Moses was a paid assistant in the classroom for the 2nd half of the year.

Young Friends: Betsy Robertson started the year off. Irene McHenry taught mindfulness, Randy Granger had a very successful month doing calligraphy, Jon Landau led Spirituality, Steve Elkinton taught self-awareness. Al Vernacchio taught Quakerism and Sexuality, Miyo Moriuchi led a Japanese Tea Ceremony, and Katie Hawkins ended the year with sessions on Mind-Body-Spirit.

We were also helped by Jean Warrington, Peter Warrington, Ann Jones, Nancy Brockway, Rachel Eshenbach, Andy Freifeld, Melissa Morris, Miguel Perez, Sunil Archarya, Signe Willkinson, and John Roberts. Many others helped in different ways.

Religious Education Committee: Diane Dunning and Betsy Robertson were co-clerks. Tricia Walmsley, Meg Mitchell, and Cyane Gresham rounded out the committee. All current members cycled off in Spring 2018, save Meg Mitchell, but agreed to stay on until the end of the school year and including the summer session. RE did a meeting-wide recruitment and are pleased to welcome five new members to the committee: Claire Ordway, Andy Freifeld, Crystal Bianchi, Jon Landau

and John Roberts. The last two have been on this committee in the past and are glad to return.

RE Coordinator: We are thrilled to have hired Donna Pucci as the RE Coordinator. It has been many years since we've had a coordinator, so the position is being built basically from scratch. Donna assumed her responsibilities immediately with great enthusiasm, efficiency, and care. Her presence has already made a difference in the RE program. We are pleased and fortunate to have her.

We are very happy about the renewed Religious Education committee. Two transitional RE committee meetings were held this Spring with everyone in attendance, old and new; the new members' participation and input is inspiring! We wish them well and are excited to see what their brave, creative, fresh points of view will bring to the children of our community.