

Multigenerational Ministry at the UU Church of Bloomington, IN

Adrienne Summerlot, Director of Religious Education at the [UU Church of Bloomington, IN](#) shares: “We are finding that people are busier than ever and seeking quality family and community time. Providing occasional opportunities for people to connect with all ages in small groups is welcome. We try to focus all of our programs towards our vision for the church: ‘Seeking the Spirit, Building Community, Changing the World’. All are involved in planning: the Religious Education Team (Minister of Religious Education, Director of Religious Education, Religious Education Support Team and Religious Education Assistants) along with great support and encouragement from our parish ministers, membership coordinator and the rest of the staff.

We offered a ***monthly Family Worship on Wednesday evenings*** for many years with great success. We shared dinner together for about 30 minutes, there was a simple craft and then we went into worship- everything from a Show and Tell with our church elders to Un-Birthday Poetry and Party to learning how to dance around the May Pole.

Spirit Play for All Ages is offered on the 3rd Thursday of the month from 5:30-7pm, exploring a story related to our congregational theme. We begin by singing a few songs as people gather in a circle. Then we share the story and wondering time in the traditional Spirit Play format. After wondering as an intergenerational group, children preschool-fifth grade are invited into the Spirit Play classroom while older children and adults stay in the meeting room. Each group explores the story through individually chosen experiences of art, writing, and/or spiritual practices for 30 minutes. We re-gather for a shared meal and share in conversation about the exploration time.

Fourth Friday Fellowship. The idea is simple, make social justice more accessible to everyone. Several Social Justice Task Forces were excited to partner with RE. We vary whether this is a potluck or pizza dinner. Examples of past programs include anti-bullying work connected with The Million Misfit Sock March and filling backpacks for the Back Pack Buddies program in conjunction with our Help Feed our Hungry Neighbors and Homelessness Task Forces. Others have been really focused on building community, including a Game Night and Church Scavenger Hunt where they followed clues and learned the history and evolution of our church building.

We have offered a ***monthly Spiritual Crafting series*** led by the Senior Minister. Offerings have included: Spirit Boats, Spiritual Journaling and Collage, Spiritual Altars,

Spirit Dolls, and Spiritual Beading. This is open to high school youth and adults, with childcare being provided and has been very well received thus far!

We also have a few stand-alone events. These include a Holiday Sing Along, Gift Making Workshop, Soul Food Dinner, and the May Pole Dance which we continue to hold.

Advice for other congregations: Have a team! You will burn out if you try to do this alone. Using Survey Monkey or something of the like to see where your congregation's interests are might be insightful and give you a good launching point. We have just begun to use Signup Genius as well to help secure volunteers and it is looking promising! Be prepared for both the failure and success. What if this idea doesn't work-how long, how do we determine when to discontinue? What is it wildly successful? How do we keep it fresh and can we sustain it in this way?

Connect with Social Justice Task Forces- here are people who are fired up and eager to share their passion! Sign Up Genius, Survey Monkey, Facebook-use a graphic or picture to promote your event-it will get many more views and shares! Having childcare available for infants and those under 3 is very helpful and busy parents are much more likely to attend a Gift Making Workshop or to volunteer if they don't have to arrange childcare for little ones; this also makes it much more accessible to single parents.