

RVUUF Congregational Discussions 2018 – 2019 Report

Introduction

Our dedicated congregation sat down together in February to share ideas and aspirations for RVUUF's future. This was the second in our series of discussions about how we want to grow as a group of people striving to live in principles that unite us as a church community. The group discussions took place on February 24, 2019 after the regular Sunday service. As with the first session in November, we had 6 groups hosted by a facilitator and scribe. The groups were spread out in and around the Great Hall and Emerson House.

Each group utilized a standard format. This included **Welcome and Introductions** followed by sharing background on why we are holding these aspiring discussions:

Our congregation is in the last year of our 5 year developmental goal cycle. It is time to begin envisioning and setting priorities for the coming years.

In working to build a leadership team, the Board, CFM and Minister hope to have a dynamic where roles, responsibilities, authority and accountability are clear in governance and ministry. We will keep you posted about our research on models of church leadership.

The facilitators prepared each group by asking that we strive to share our ideas in the context of our covenant and using compassion as our guide.

Two principle questions were posed to the group and everyone was invited to reflect and share in the conversation.

- 1st Question: What does Lifespan Learning or Faith Formation mean to you and how does it tie into our commitment to the RVUUF mission?
- 2nd Question: What do you see in 2025 as you look into the future of RVUUF? What do you want to strengthen, to hope for, or envision for the learning program at RVUUF?

Group Minutes

Tables on pages 3-6 offer a synopsis of responses provided by each group. As much as possible duplicates within each group were deleted unless it was not possible to do this because it would not reflect the spirit of the input. Duplicates between groups were not removed so as to show commonalities. Repetitions within groups are noted with a star (★). Here is a short description of each group:

Group 1: Facilitator and scribe: Joanie Kintscher and Jackie Rosen, 12 people.

Group 2: Facilitator and scribe: John Limb and Rosalie Caffrey, 7 people.

Group 3: Facilitator and scribe: Roger Howe and Mary Rexford, 9 people.

Group 4: Facilitator and scribe: Phil Westergaard and Manny De Aquino, 6 people.

Group 5: Facilitator and scribe: Suzanne Andersen and Jim Meckel, 8 people.

Group 6: Facilitator and scribe: Alex Lucaks and Nadine Kanim, 9 people.

Evaluation:

Question sheets were handed out to participants at the end of discussions. Many were collected and some of the responses are noted here.

- People excited about mix of ages in their groups
- People committed to taking up certain tasks
- People want to grow the youth program and inter-generational activities
- Positive comments about our minister
- Concern about not having facility to accommodate larger programs
- College students looking for ways to make connections
- RE teachers want to work more on programs
- People want to be more informed on what is happening; this connects with CFM work on how to best communicate with congregation

Other Comments

Comments were shared within the groups at the closing of discussions. Here are some of the notes captured from the groups.

“We need to do these group discussion groups more frequently!!”

“Productive”

“Hopeful”

“Promising”

“Dynamic”

“Diverse”

“Stimulating”

“Warmth”

“Inter-generational”

“People will come if they know what UU is about”

“grateful, energized, excited, hopeful”

“Gratitude, Hope, Enthusiasm”

Question: What does Lifespan Learning, or Faith Formation mean to you and how does it tie into our commitment to the RVUUF mission? Groups 1-3.

Group 1:

- ★ classes and projects for all ages, e.g., Sign Language
- projects for kids: intention for a day; lollipops sold before, money used to buy yarn for knitters to make hats for kids
- RE Parents craving classes, like Cat Cox
- Druid class; in past by Vern Crawford
- activities needed in Talent
- ★ recorded many RVUUF elders, in open-ended interviews, in RVUUF Library on DVD. Might be time to resume this again; might show DVDs in evenings or afternoons, grandparents' day or Ancestors service?
- ★ learn about other cultures, UU opportunities and religions
 - Make Your Own Religion (other title?)
 - program where retired school buses make a home for family with at least 1 child, need a place for it to reside
- ★ meditation for adults not during work hours; introduce kids, too; RVUUF Sangha could share and meet 1 on 1 or in group
 - meditation introduced to children in RE
- ★ outdoor activities and outings for kids: skiing, skating, zip-lining, karaoke, dog party, movies, games; how to connect adults who could take kids to these activities?
 - make board game called "Random Acts of Kindness"; could be all age project; sell at UUA bookstore; example of project by kids and their community
 - RVUUF has great bicycling group
 - felting class
 - feel supported at RVUUF even if we make mistakes and as we learn new things; enjoy learning new things and OLLI
- ★ have RVUUF groups join for community projects; kids could make toys, set up backpacks for needy kids
 - let people know the projects we are doing

Group 2:

- opportunity to keep growing; needs to be different than what is already available to meet needs
- Ideas – aging – ie. services available, activities for parents and children. The fun committee educates us for fun and laughter. It provides an opportunity to keep learning – from young to old
- expose children to non-violent communication (Rosenberg); learn how to relate to one another.
- includes coming to the services on Sunday, singing, practicing social skills. A place where transgender people can be accepted and learn to have a healthy lifestyle
- learning how to raise my child as a UU. No rituals for daily life to integrate identity
- we don't need additional activities; already have numerous groups, e.g., Buddhists, etc.
- Group activities are different from classes.
- UU too focused on human communication – need to focus more on individual experiences such as solitude, meditation. Help us to value and use our inner resources
- focus more on the natural world. We are too anthropocentric. More environmental experiences

Group 3:

- notion of humanism; came to learn more about diff world religions and ideologies, concepts, and how I could incorporate into my own life
- poet, lectures, people from diff. backgrounds. people my age are looking for this kind of experience, and don't know about UU, maybe more outreach to SOU
- I like UU goals; embrace diversity includes the essence of what we find in many religions
- cultural stagnation is a problem of religion, the task of spirituality is to disrobe that, UU offers a way forward
- expose kids to religious diversity, values of love, forgiveness. I love what you're doing with them, shaping their future
- try to be inclusive. I'm searching for a faith, why are there not more minorities? All UU churches are like this, even the big Portland church, UUs have work to do, goals to achieve.
- ★ look at how to be more present in RVUUF and the community. Took BYOT yrs. ago, interesting, helpful, want us to do it again, esp. for people looking to understand their belief system
 - excited about this fellowship and our potential to bring more love into the world
 - like BYOT idea. I struggle with diversity. For whom? So UU's can feel good about ourselves?
 - don't have a lot to say about lifespan learning
 - need younger people
 - Race is an Ashland issue, I miss tapestry of Oakland, but living here is wonderful

Question: What does Lifespan Learning or Faith Formation mean to you and how does it tie into our commitment to the RVUUF mission? Groups 4-6

Group 4:

- need more SOU students involved in RVUUF (choir); college students get people talking about what is happening now; insight for all.
- RVUUF music dept. hires SOU students for choir, typically music/theatre majors; open music program to other students;
- other churches have young adult study groups—weekly outreach centered around taking college students to lunch and having conversations.
- ★ pursue learning credit from SOU for students participating in RVUUF programs.
- do we want to expand the congregation?
- need synergy beyond age demographics; show some of what we do at UU in welcoming remarks to audiences here for other events
- ★ advertise what we are doing (choir, RE, social justice, etc)

Group 5:

- ★ learning is where we make diverse connections and observations; where we engage our mission
- important for kids to see things getting done in RVUUF community; shows commitment to our mission
- Soul matters themes are addressed in sermons; monthly themes connect our community building
- keeping Rev. Sean as minister
- News to Note is a way to inform one another of what is happening in different groups
- more communication would be helpful
- like to hear about what youth are doing
- like to see an adult version of RE
- bible study but not necessarily the bible
- study 7 principles
- more inter-generational projects needed: art, service projects, community projects, food bank

Group 6:

- different kind of education that you would get from “Ollie”
- world will be diff in 5 years; hard to set a plan
- ★ we should adapt; education is an opportunity to learn and grow with fellow RVUUF'ians
- ★ learning is much valued
- ★ adult education is a personal growth issue; explore who you are and bring that value to the congregation
- ★ involve younger adults in lifelong learning; provide childcare to attract these people; ask families
- consider schedules for working people and those who don't drive; car-pooling?
- performance report at end of our 5 year plan?
- How has your faith been stressed over the last 5 years?; a question evaluating personal growth and programs
- what are the features of lifelong learning? Do we always have to be in the same place at the same time; Skype?
- Soul Matters subjects are big commitment; would like simpler things; prefer Small Group Ministry requiring no prep
- some people prefer short courses lasting a few weeks; others prefer year-long course. One-shots like “Ollie” offers might be option
- take account of the resources we have: technology, facility, etc.
- open things up to the outside community?
- attend UU District Meetings and Assemblies; share experience during a Sunday morning service
- state the purpose of the program; does it need to be religious? now there is a “Great Decisions” class on
- ACCESSIBILITY is big issue
- caution to CFM and Board: avoid doing too many things at once
- technologically we have system for education; Tech. Committee should offer short course on Google Suite
- travel shares is a success

Question: What do you see in 2025 as you look into the future of RVUUF? What do you want to strengthen, to hope for, or envision for the learning program at RVUUF?

Groups 1-3

<p>Group 1:</p> <p>All captured in First Question table above.</p>	<p>Group 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• focus on youth; be part of a group; youth interfaith group in Ashland is Christian oriented• many parents in the community not religiously affiliated; potential recruits for the RE program; hire a recruitment person?• RVUUF needs to be place where kids can develop morally and ethically; practice restorative justice• a service aimed at families? Saturday evening?• If RE is meaningful, kids will sell it to their friends• cultural diversity is a problem in this community• include kids in the full congregational experience; give them an integral role• we should expand to Medford• reach out to Grants Pass, K-Falls for youth activities; use Skype or other tech, but human to human interaction preferable	<p>Group 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• what goes on in RE? What aspirations, what are they teaching; want to know teacher's ideas• DRE and teachers could sum up what they're doing during a regular Sunday service• congregant who gives talks on nature could make a presentation• have a movie night• volunteer for RE on your Neighborhood Team's Sunday• whole congregation should be doing more good works in our community• if we want more young people - SOU, high school - they want to feel welcomed rather than judged• interfaith panel for the future and for learning• teen/young people service where they can be together; this generation is getting engaged, soul-searching; include how they feel about faith• I volunteer in classroom and like what I see• Camp Latgawa: reach out to nearby communities• would like a book club, humanists, but can't always make the times• volunteer to do things together in nature, volunteer for conservation; group hikes• weekly lecture series or panel• adopt a refugee family, a good way to act on our mission
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**Question: What do you see in 2025 as you look into the future of RVUUF? What do you want to strengthen, to hope for, or envision for the learning program at RVUUF?
Groups 4-6**

Group 4:

- kids involved in the garden; see where food comes from
- address issues of homelessness—be an example to other churches
- caregivers for older seniors in the community
- RVUUF has been involved in social issues; community outside of RVUUF does not know about it; need to communicate this
- Social justice now invites groups once/month to receive offering
- ★ consider having a social hall as has been discussed in the past; stretching our facility as far as we can
- expansion of facility would have to be looked at anew; how large do we want programs to grow?
- how much has the church community grown?
- ★ college age participants need more accessibility for discussion; learn by being in groups
- ★ youth group or club meeting at Emerson House? other UU group?
- invite other groups to come share their work and experiences
- youth is our future; good to have more youth involvement
- Dawn Nightshade does a good job scheduling access to facilities
- take groups of children to other churches for inter-faith connections

Group 5:

- get together for fun activities
- Caring committee that is more visible. How do we help others in need? Meal trains for people in need. Births, deaths, illness, rides to services, more communication about these needs
- ★ feature biographies of people in RVUUF, member interviews; get to know each other
- ★ connect youth with elders; help on projects together, build relationships, get to know each other
- outreach to the community, university, with projects; meet for coffee and conversation with college students
- ★ groups for teens, young adults, and college students; self-directed group activities
- more space to do activities
- more involvement for teens and pre-teens
- info out to community about Rev. Sean; interview article
- get new families in, energize the families that are here now

Group 6:

- teachers provide a safe environment, building community among the young
- we should have a stable teenage program; keep young kids engaged
- teachers are in the process finding their niche
- more communication with focus on kids; what would keep them here?
- RE focus on “peace”
- teaching children to eat properly and exercise as a means to a healthy mind
- should be able to say “what we believe”; perhaps 5 minutes at the pulpit for congregants to give their “story” – their “Search for Meaning”
- need “Coming of Age” program; in the past, older kids felt awkward, because UU'ism is so weird; have programs where outside friends can take part
- need a larger facility for our programs
- need a way to celebrate kids from being “kids” to adult members of the congregation; a ritual
- thank you for inviting the older kids to participate in these meetings
- congregants invited to come to RE on a Sunday morning hear about what they do
- get more people involved by telling the general public about who UU's are