

TOUCHSTONES FOR THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

(from our meeting and from previous children & youth planning)

What do we want our children to know and to have experienced by the time they leave home?

- ✧ God is awesome and mysterious.
- ✧ God loves us. We love and care for each other.
- ✧ We believe in Jesus. We each define what that means in our own way and we are enriched by learning from each other.
- ✧ With God's inspiration and each other's help, we are becoming spiritually-growing, justice people.
- ✧ *Roots and Wings*: We help each other become confident of the ground on which we stand and grow strong wings with which to fly.
- ✧ In the world, we will be challenged by people with other (often contrary) beliefs, people who are articulate and well-versed in what they believe. We want to prepare to engage them respectfully when those moments arise. [Not every church is like CUCC; not all Christians love questions.]
- ✧ Being faithful in the church and in the world is to take my place, to be a leader, to use my gifts.

How will we structure the youth religious education program?

- ✧ **Work hard + have fun**
- ✧ **Questions**: We seek to provide safe spaces for people to ask any question and to build a strong community so we know people whom we trust to ask.
- ✧ **Toolkit**: Each of us – at all ages - participates in religious education in order to **expand and deepen** the toolkit we bring on the journey. We want each child to leave us with a toolkit which he or she can use throughout life. Throughout their experience at CUCC, we keep giving them things and experiences and they keep making things for the toolkit.
- ✧ **Experiment and practice**: Religious education experiences are designed to help us try new tools to see if they might work for us now or in the future and to practice so the tools are more useful.
- ✧ **Multiple intelligences**: Each of us has ways we learn best. We will provide religious education experiences in the many ways people learn.
- ✧ **Risk taking**: All of us are called to do it and it is the job of youth to do it with pizzazz.

The Youth Program

Youth Church School

During the years of Children's Church School, students travel in multi-grade batches, developing friendships and a sense of group identity. This valuable community will continue to be nurtured in youth group.

At the same time, the pre-teen and teen years are times of personal exploration. The world of the 5th grader is very different from that of a 6th. For these reasons, youth will transition from Journey to Confirmation to Pre-adult classes based on their school grade. The schedule for the next few years follows. Parents may consult with YREC if they feel their child's needs

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 would be better met by *delaying* progression to the next course; only in very rare circumstances will a youth be able to skip ahead.

What courses will I take when?

Public school graduation class (grade)	Class of 2009*, 2010, 2011, 2012* [group A]	Class of 2013, 2014 [group B]	Class of 2015 [group C]	Class of 2016 [group D]	Class of 2017 [group E]	Class of 2018
2008-9	Pre-adult (9, 10, 11, 12)	Confirmation Year 1 (7, 8)	Journey with Jesus (6)	Journey with Jesus (5)	Children's Church School (4)	Children's Church School
2009-10	Pre-adult (10, 11, 12)	Confirmation Year 2 (8, 9)	Confirmation Year 2 (7)	Journey TBD (6)	Journey TBD (5)	Children's Church School
2010-11	Pre-adult (11, 12)	Pre-adult (9, 10)	Confirmation Year 1 (8)	Confirmation Year 1 (7)	Journey with Jesus (6)	Journey with Jesus (5)
2011-12	Pre-adult (12)	Pre-adult (10, 11)	Pre-adult (9)	Confirmation Year 2 (8)	Confirmation Year 2 (7)	Journey TBD (6)
2012-13		Pre-adult (11, 12)	Pre-adult (10)	Pre-adult (9)	Confirmation Year 1 (8)	Confirmation Year 1 (7)
2013-14		Pre-adult (12)	Pre-adult (11)	Pre-adult (10)	Pre-adult (9)	Confirmation Year 2 (8)

* We currently have no students graduating in these years.

Which classes are taught each year?

2009-10	Journey with Jesus	Confirmation Year 1	Pre-adult
2010-11	Journey TBD	Confirmation Year 2	Pre-adult
2011-12	Journey with Jesus	Confirmation Year 1	Pre-adult
2012-13	Journey TBD	Confirmation Year 2	Pre-adult
2013-14	Journey with Jesus	Confirmation Year 1	Pre-adult

Youth Church School Courses

Journey

Journey is a two-year transitional course designed to build a bridge from childhood to youth. Each year's work is independent of the other so that a student can enter the two-year cycle in either year.

Focus: PERSONAL IDENTITY What are my questions? What do I think? What is my interpretation of this text? What are my skills and interests? What do I have to offer?

Classes: *Journey with Jesus* focuses on engaging with the Bible by reading the entire Gospel of Mark. Journey youth use their emerging critical and abstracting skills to examine Biblical text.

Journey TBD does not yet have a focus [ideas from Jane: Journey in the World: middle school life in society OR Journey with the Saints: Christian esp. UCC forebearers].

2008-9 Calendar

1st Sundays – worship

2nd & 3rd Sundays – Gospel of Mark study using existing curriculum – Jane Smith

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4th Sundays – Journey Youth Group Enrichment activities led by pairs of Journey parents. These might extend past the 11:45 close of church school in order to include field trips, projects, or service activities

5th Sundays – All Youth Group Eat at church-wide “ed+food” and do an activity together
- Šánti Matthews

Rationale: Program is designed to take advantage of emerging powers of abstraction and desire to “grow up.” Monthly Journey Youth Group provides initial experiences in youth group without the intensive commitment and with parental support; 5th Sunday All Youth Group begins integration into the older group.

Confirmation

Confirmation is a two-year course. Each year’s work is independent of the other so that a student can enter the cycle in either year.

Focus: “Am I ready to say publicly, ‘I am a Christian,’ and to say what that means to me at this point on my journey? Am I ready to claim my place in the church?”

Classes: The YREC will develop the details with Steve, but likes the following ingredients:

- 1st Sundays - worship
- One teacher leads two blocks annually of intensive focus on confirmation curriculum [perhaps Sept./Oct. and Jan./Feb.] Important components:
 - Course work which focuses on Jesus Christ. It is okay to want to know about other faiths, but that isn’t the focus of this class. This is a community where we believe in Jesus; we each define that our own way and are enriched by the different answers.
 - A safe place to ask any question I want
 - Information about the UCC and what we believe
 - Information about what is distinctive about CUCC and our heritage
 - What do I believe?
 - Clarity that “confirmation” is one decision point among countless on the journey – we expect they will keep asking questions, keep renewing their faith, keep revising what they believe
- For those who decide to confirm their faith, the service of confirmation includes making a public statement of where one is on the journey now. This public statement is an important piece of preparing the youth to articulate what they believe when they are challenged by highly trained and articulate people (ie., in high school and college).
- Opportunities to connect deeply with the pastor (esp. in connection with the public statement).
- The remaining Sundays are spent either doing something “fun” (nourishing the not-yet-adult) or connecting to the post-confirmation youth (with Šánti).

2008-9 Calendar: TBD

Rationale: One job of youth at confirmation age is to decide what parts of childhood to bring into young adulthood. Hence, they swing back and forth between their child and emerging-adult selves. While the confirmation material could be covered in one year, sustained intellectual engagement is not what middle schoolers do. Also, families find it difficult to make a commitment to a year of attendance. Spreading the confirmation curriculum over two years gives breathing room to the youth and their families. The confirmation curriculum is punctuated with enrichment blocks and with classes shared with older youth.

Pre-adult [We’ve got to get a better name!]

Pre-adult class extends through high school or until the youth chooses to attend adult education opportunities.

Focus: TAKING MY PLACE IN THE CHURCH COMMUNITY This is the emerging leaders class [Leaders Class?]

Classes: TBD We like the following ingredients:

- Gift identification
- Articulating what I believe to those who challenge my Christianity

YOUTH GROUP

Journey Youth Group

- Parent-led with support from Šánti
- 4th Sunday Journey Youth Group enrichment activities led by parent pairs
- 5th Sunday All Youth Group with older youth led by Šánti
- Ideally, occasional (quarterly?) family gatherings for youth to hang out while parents plan
- One parent-youth retreat led by Steve to deepen connection with him

Youth Group

- Confirmation and Pre-adult youth led by Šánti
- Two after-worship meetings/month
- One monthly fun activity
- One monthly service project serving either CUCC or the wider community
- 5th Sunday All Youth Group with Journey Youth led by Šánti
- [One Conference Youth Event and one National Youth Event as possible]
- Youth mission trips – TBD as opportunities arise

rites of passage

- rose on communion table at birth
- 3rd grade Bible
- journal (presented initially when they move to ? and returned to them at the close of the Confirmation course)
- Cup of Life chalice done in youth group
- High school graduation: youth-made bag (the toolkit) including ? (finger labyrinth, beads, name of a congregation like CUCC where they go to college)

PARENT SUPPORT

Parenting is hard work. Let's risk asking each other how things are going and following up hunches that all is not well in parent-land. Listen and don't feel you have to solve the problem or offer sage advice. Ask if there is anything you can do to support the parent and/or the child. As always, keep confidences.

If we want our youth to come to the adults they trust with their hard times, we need to model doing it ourselves.

AFTER-CARE

We'd love to see:

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- * an already-existing group at CUCC who would enjoy staying in touch with the youth as they head off to post-high school life. Perhaps quarterly cards, annual surprises at exam time?
- * Youth group send exam care package first year away
- * Youth Day become reunion for youth coming back to CUCC