

Thomas Jefferson District Religious Education Committee Report

April 2010

This past year, the RE committee opted to move its retreat to late summer to better accommodate congregational schedules. We met at the district office for 3 days to review the previous year's goals and achievements, look at new models of service delivery and set the calendar for opportunities to provide trainings for professional and lay leaders. Our key areas of focus continue to be resources, trainings, support and advocacy. With Sue Sinnamon's leadership we identified a four-year training cycle to address the areas identified in the district strategic plan. Our 'clusters' ne "Community Circles", continue to be our most challenging task, but we are making progress. Facilitators have been identified for the first meetings and we will be launching them in the fall. We hope to meet with the South Coast circle during the Annual Meeting. Perhaps the two most exciting works in progress are the second year of Goldmine, a week-long youth leadership camp and our annual multi-track programming. This year's included a Renaissance Module that had several lay religious educators participating.

Our following goals, according to the district strategic plan, were developed last year.

- 1. We will provide a wide-range of effective and geographically-accessible training opportunities and programming for our member congregations within the Thomas Jefferson District focused on Unitarian Universalist faith development, leadership development, congregational health, social justice, and stewardship.**

We are continuing to enjoy success with our multi-track spring programming. This spring our renaissance module was attended by lay leaders as well as religious professionals. With Sue Sinnamon's assistance we have strategically planned a four year development programming cycle to address faith development, leadership development, congregational health, social justice and stewardship.

- 2. We will continually work toward living in right relations with each other by striving to transform the district and assisting its member congregations in living their covenant to be in relationship with each other and toward becoming anti-racist, anti-oppressive communities.**

Goldmine, the youth leadership school, was very successful. We look forward to our second year which will include 1st year participants on staff. We continue to explore ways to include youth our multi-track programming. We have a youth leadership school scheduled for the summer. We are currently working on a brochure, with assistance from Kathleen Carpenter, to assist congregations in planning youth conferences.

- 3. We will provide consultation services to member congregations to assist them in assuring successful searches and transitions of ministers and other religious professionals.**

Sue Sinnamon continues to provide support with mentors and start-up weekends.

- 4. We will grow membership within existing congregations and support new congregations to, at a minimum, keep pace with the population increases in our region.**

Our new 'Circles', included trained facilitators to assist in helping congregations (especially our smaller congregations) to address professional development, lay leadership and growth within them.

5. We will develop strong lifespan faith development programs throughout the district with a special focus on programming for youth, young adult and campus ministry.

Our most recent multi-track programming included teacher development and adult RE. The new Teacher Development module is based on the work of Parker Palmer with the intent of encouraging teachers to practice personal faith development.

6. We will be good stewards of financial and human resources, both paid and volunteer, while educating congregations about the benefits of generosity and collaboration.

Multi-track trainings, 'Circles', and mentors are all designed with cost effectiveness in mind. Our programs are often attended by teams, that share travel expenses. Accommodations are comfortable, centrally located and affordable. We provide scholarships, especially for smaller congregations.