

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH GROUP REPORT
UU CHURCH OF NASHUA JUNE 2014

This year's Sr. High Youth Group met on Sunday evenings from 6-8pm in the Youth Room. Monica Staples, Chuck Rehberg, Roy Goodman and Lynn Coakley were the Youth Advisors. Lynn Coakley attends the UUCM (Milford) church. Since the Milford church did not have an active Youth Group, we had one additional youth also from the Milford Church. There were about eight regularly active youth, although they did not all attend at the same time.

Sessions began and closed with chalice lighting and snuffing rituals. They have a ceremonial "talking stick", (a stuffed sloth named Lazarus or Russ for short) that was passed around the circle as individuals "checked in". This check in continues to be where much of their curriculum was generated, as the advisors were listening deeply to what was happening in the lives of those present.

The over-riding focus of the advisors was to build on last year's relationship work enough to engage tough personal and ethical questions. Effort was made to create a safe place where all, youth and advisors alike, were valued, honored and treated with respect. At the beginning of the year they created a covenant that served them well throughout the year.

The youth in this year's group were heavily involved in extracurricular activities, mostly in theater and band. Since who would be at youth group on any given night was highly variable, the activities were highly adaptable. Some nights had as many as 6 youth and other nights a few as 1 youth. As a group we went on field trips to each other's performances. This was fun. We also attended some of the Inter-Faith Basketball games to cheer on the Uni-Unis, where one of our youth, as well as, some of next year's youth were players.

Most meetings were loosely based on the LIFT (Life Issues For Teenagers) curriculum. Chuck, who has 27 years of experience as a youth advisor, feels that although some of the information from the curriculum is outdated, the methodology and internal structure are still very good: Initiation, Interaction, Investigation and Integration. "Check-ins" and conversations continue to generate information about what is important to the youth in attendance and what they would like to talk or learn more about. Of course in the absence of any clear "issues", the advisors always have a list of relevant topics. We continued to show "TED talks" where the topic is relevant (such as gender identity and assumptions related to gender). It is amazing this year's youth support each other and have such a clear and steady moral compass.

An invitation letter was sent out to potential youth in September (attached). As an outreach project, they have a tradition of collecting gently used items from church members and offering them to church school students for yard sale prices at Christmas time so the children can afford gifts to give their family. This year, the money was then donated to the Bridges: Domestic & Sexual Violence Support of Nashua & Milford. The youth group also invited the OWL (Our Whole Lives) and R.O.P.E.s (Rites of Passage Experience) students to join them for a Pizza &

Game night, so they could get to know some of the folks they might be in a group with next year, and just have some fun. A lot of fun was had by all that reported back.

It is our practice to induct new members into the youth group every 2 years, or whenever there is a graduating R.O.P.E Class. This often leaves a smaller youth group during the second year. This year [2014] as with many of the last 10 years, the youth group made and presented silver chalice pendants to each of the ROPEs youth during a bridging ceremony on the Sunday they presented their credos to the congregation. Despite be under-attended, this has been a satisfying year for the youth and the leaders. The leaders are looking forward to what will be accomplished next year as this year's youth welcome a very promising group of R.O.P.E.s graduates to their youth group experience.

Respectfully submitted by Chuck Rehberg and Monica Staples, Youth Group Advisers

June 5, 2014