

The Adventure of Becoming: Dynamic RE for All

General Assembly 2011
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Questions to Ask in Adult RE Program Planning

Visioning Questions

- What is the guiding vision for your program?
- How do you know/assess if your programs are in service to the mission of your church?
- Who has the authority to plan the program? Recruit volunteers? Engage speakers? Say “no” to a proposed program?
- Are there challenges in your current Adult RE program that are not congruent with or make it more difficult to follow your guiding vision? How might that be changed?
- How do you encourage people to take leadership?
- What training or support do you offer to group leaders?

Content Questions

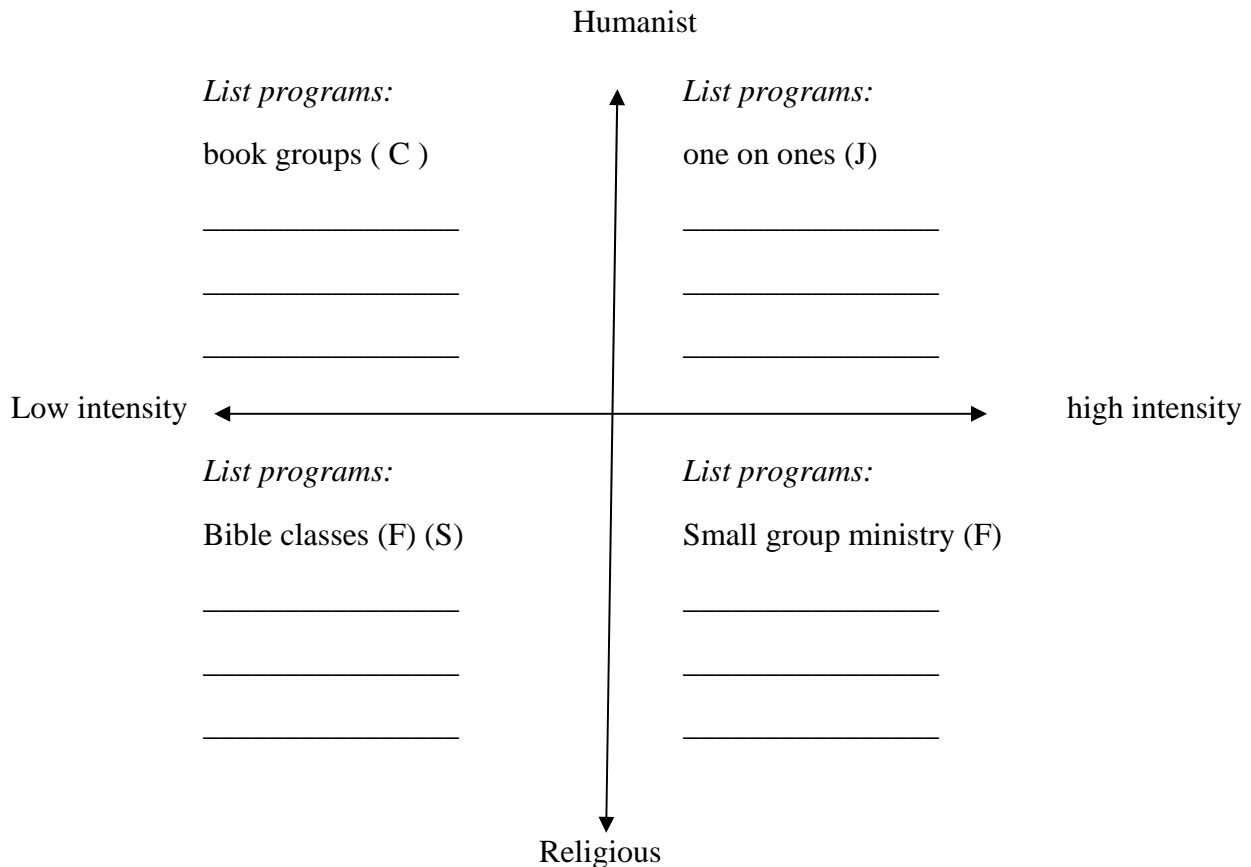
- How do you determine if your programs are religious education?
- How do you balance the needs of various constituencies in the congregation? Is there a balance of huddling (cohort groups or affinity groups) and mixing (groups which draw from a variety of parts of the congregation?)
- How do you move toward a model where volunteer leaders are skilled group leaders rather than necessarily subject matter experts?
- Do you offer pastoral support/pastoral care for your programs?
- How do you decide whether or not to limit the size of a particular group? How do you determine whether a group is open or closed after the introductory sessions?

Operational Questions

- How do you get started?
- How much programming can your congregation actually support, in terms of volunteers, building, budget, and participants? How do you determine that?
- What times of the week are available for programming? When are people likely to come?
- Is there a formal application/structure/timeline for programming proposals?
- How are volunteers supported? Whose responsibility is it? (logistics, training, pastoral support)
- How do you publicize programs?
- How do you set and maintain behavior expectations in your programs? (resource: “Sharing the Floor: Some Strategies for Effective Group Facilitation” by Judith A. Frediani, www.uua.org/re/adults/151805.shtml)

Developing a Mission-Based Adult RE Program

1. Translate your congregational mission statement into program. For example, the mission statement of First Church in Boston says: *First Church is a contemporary community; inspiring seekers, nurturing faith, and growing justice in the heart of Boston.* This statement has four aspects: community (C), inspiring seekers (S), nurturing faith (F) and growing justice (J). Every offering (whether minister-led or lay-led) should support some aspect of the mission statement.
2. Assess the need of your congregation. Some people, either because they are new or just because of preference, will only participate in low-intensity programs, i.e. programs that engage primarily the head and not the heart and that do not require personal disclosure. Other people will be looking for higher-intensity programs with deeper sharing and reflection.
3. Determine the theological or spiritual character and spectrum of your particular congregation. In many UU congregations, people are distributed along a “humanist-religious” theological spectrum. For some congregations, there may be more theological agreement, but a distribution along a “right brain/artistic – left brain/cognitive” programming preferences spectrum.
4. Use a four quadrant chart to help choose adult RE offerings. In this chart “intensity” will be the horizontal axis. The vertical axis denotes the theological or spiritual spectrum. You may need more than one chart if your congregation is large or particularly diverse. *Here’s an example:*



Ideally, each quadrant will have programs for each aspect of the mission statement.

**Religious Education Ministry
at the North Parish of North Andover, Unitarian Universalist**

Goal: Development of a sustaining faith, a total response to life, with both sense of spirituality and religious identity as a Unitarian Universalist.

	FIRST TASK: Learn how Unitarian Universalists “Do” religion: Introduction to Unitarian Universalism, its symbols and practices	SECOND TASK: Learn the Stories, Practices, and Lore of the Faith Community.	THIRD TASK: Thinking about Oneself and One’s Faith. Discern: “Who am I as a Religious Person?”	FOURTH TASK: Deeper reflection, testing of faith against the ambiguities/difficulties of life. Become one’s own religious authority
Children and Youth	<i>Preschool and kindergarten: explicit UU curricula</i> <i>Children and youth new to the church: Attendance and participation in worship</i>	<i>Children in grades one through eight and children and youth new to the church: Attendance and participation in worship, small groups, and social justice projects.</i>	<i>Junior and Senior Youth: participate in small groups and in social justice projects with reflection about project. Learn to lead worship. Our Whole Lives sexuality discussions (grade 8). Coming of Age (grade 9) Bridging (age 18 or Gr.12)</i>	<i>High School youth: Senior youth, small groups, personal spiritual practice, social justice projects with reflection, leadership in the wider congregation, Involvement in the wider UUA. Carry faith into the world.</i>
Adults	<i>Attendance and participation in worship. Attendance and participation in New UU class.</i>	<i>Attendance and participation in worship. Attendance at adult spirituality events. Participation in social justice projects. Participating in committee work, a task group, or leading a children’s group.</i>	<i>Participation in small group ministry. Service as a Coming of Age mentor. Serving in a leadership position on a committee or small group.</i>	<i>Participation in small group ministry, personal spiritual practice, social justice projects with reflection, leadership in the congregation, carry one’s faith into one’s life and into the larger world.</i>

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Tapestry of Faith Adult Programs and Resources Online

Building the World We Dream About by Dr. Mark A. Hicks
www.uua.org/tapestry/buildingworld

Discussion Guide for UU Groups: *The Death of Josseline* – UUA Common Read 2010-2011
www.uua.org/documents/lfd/commonread/josseline_guide.pdf

Faith Like a River: Themes from Unitarian Universalist History by the Rev. Jackie Clement and the Rev. Alison Cornish
www.uua.org/tapestry/faithlike

Gather the Spirit by Christine Rafal

Harvest the Power: Developing Lay Leadership by Rev. Matt Tittle, Gail Tittle, and Gail Forsyth-Vail
www.uua.org/tapestry/harvestpower

The New UU by Rev. Jonalu Johnstone
www.uua.org/tapestry/thenew

Principled Commitment by Melanie J. Davis Stephanie Haymaker, Ph.D. Craig Hirshberg, M.Div., and Richard Bellingham, Ed.D.
www.uua.org/tapestry/principledcommitment

Resistance and Transformation: Unitarian Universalist Social Justice History by Rev. Colin Bossen and Rev. Julia Hamilton
www.uua.org/tapestry/resistancetransformation

Spirit in Practice by Rev. Erik Walker Wikstrom
www.uua.org/tapestry/spiritpractice

Spirit of Life by Rev. Barbara Hamilton-Holway
www.uua.org/tapestry/spiritlife

A Study Guide to *Milk* and Guía de estudio de la película *Milk* (transl. Francisco Javier Lagunes Gaitán) by the Rev. Mark Belletini
www.uua.org/lgbt/125446.shtml
www.uua.org/documents/belletinimark/milk_espanol.pdf

What Moves Us: Unitarian Universalist Theology by Rev. Dr. Thandeka
www.uua.org/tapestry/whatmoves

Coming Soon

Ethics (adult program)

Discussion Guide for *Elite: Uncovering Classism in Unitarian Universalist History*

Discussion Guide for *The Spirit Leads: Margaret Fuller in Her Own Words*

Wisdom from the Hebrew Scriptures (multigenerational program)