

REPORT OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CREDENTIALING COMMITTEE

VISION

The vision of the Religious Education Credentialing Committee is a strong and healthy educational ministry through faith development in our Unitarian Universalist congregations.

MISSION

The mission of the Religious Education Credentialing Committee is to develop professional standards and credential religious educators to serve the Unitarian Universalist movement.

We will do this by:

- Identifying an accepted core of competencies and skills.
- Evaluating candidates and granting credentials.
- Affirming an anti-racist/ anti-oppressive/ multicultural perspective in all of our processes and practices.
- Educating congregations about the need for and advantages of supporting professional growth and development of religious educators.
- Encouraging the building of accountability and right relationships among religious educators, professional colleagues, and lay leaders.
- Preparing professional religious educators to provide programmatic resources that strengthen and challenge their congregations in order to transform lives and make the world a better place.

Here are the highlights of our work over the past year:

Welcoming new members

The Committee gratefully acknowledged the work of outgoing chair and LREDA representative Liz Jones, outgoing Board of Trustees representative Pam Allen-Thompson, and outgoing lay representative Sue McGovern. We welcomed new members Will Saunders, Board representative, Jan Devor, LREDA representative, and Russ Araujo, lay representative.

Evaluating candidates and granting credentials

Religious Education credentials were granted to seven individuals this year. The committee evaluated a number of waiver requests and requests for equivalencies from individuals who are working toward a credential.

Requiring background checks

The Committee instituted a requirement for both background checks and criminal offense disclosure from all candidates in the program and proposed rule changes to the Board (later passed) that reflected the new requirements.

Clarifying the identified core competencies and skills

Ever since we began our work four years ago the Committee has been challenged by the charge to design a comprehensive credentialing program and simultaneously to grant credentials to individuals. The early years of the program saw a number of changes which frustrated candidates to some degree. After four years, we have specified a list of core skills and competencies for Associate, Credentialed, and Master's level religious educators and have produced a chart which names those competencies, along with suggestions as to how each might be demonstrated by the candidate. We have also created a unified reading list which directly correlates with the competencies, a list which highlights anti-racist/anti-oppressive/multi-cultural readings while dispersing them across the competency categories. Still under development is a document intended for congregations which will identify the ways in which Associate,

credentialed, and Master's level religious educators can be expected to work within a congregational structure.

Responding to trends in the field

The Committee has been told that more individuals are choosing Religious Education as a viable career path, in part due to the credentialing program. We are also increasingly aware that we are working with two different constituencies- those who are long-timers in the field and those who have entered since the credentialing program was instituted. Each group brings a different set of challenges and assumptions to the credentialing process, and our program must effectively support the professional development of both. We continue to gather information and keep trends in mind as we move ahead with our work. Specific responses have included:

- At the request of LREDA leadership, we had a conversation with Joyce Stewart of the Office of Church Staff Finances as to how to better inform professional Religious Educators about financial realities and long-term planning. RECC and LREDA will continue this important conversation.
- We invited two young adult Religious Educators who are lifelong Unitarian Universalists to speak with the committee about particular perspectives they bring to the profession and to our work as a credentialing body.
- We continue to educate congregations about the program via GA workshops and other information and to educate RE professionals via workshops at professional events.
- We welcome feedback from the field and have taken seriously suggestions and concerns that have been brought to us. Of particular concern to the RECC is that the program be accessible to individuals in a wide variety of circumstances and that the program requirements improve the skills of Religious Educators in order to strengthen religious education programming and faith development in our congregations.

Applying an anti-racist/anti-oppression/multicultural lens to our work

The committee has adopted a practice of integrating A-R/A-O/MC work into its semi-annual meetings, wherever possible using resources that are available to us in the community where a meeting is held. Continuing this practice, we spent time in October 2007 discussing the book *Unequal Childhoods* by Annette Lareau, exploring social class issues in child rearing, and how those issues might impact the work of religious educators. In April 2008, we spent the better part of the day with Bill Norris, one of the creators of *Wilderness Journey*, a video which includes the reflections and memories of many involved in the UUA "Black Empowerment Controversy." We watched the video together and talked about the implications it holds for our work as a Credentialing Committee. Insights from this learning experience will help the RECC in some of its decision making going forward.

We are grateful for the day-to-day work of Rev. Beth Williams, RE Credentialing Director, who administers the program and provides guidance and support to participants and to the Committee. Thanks also go to Paula Welling, RE Credentialing assistant for keeping us organized, and to Rev. Beth Miller for overall support of the RE Credentialing program. Thank you for the opportunity to serve the Unitarian Universalist Association in such a meaningful way!

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Forsyth-Vail, chair

Committee members: Russ Araujo, Jan Devor, Rev. Kirk Loadman-Copeland, Steve Lynn, Rev. Colleen MacDonald, Rev. Will Saunders, Kathryn Warrior