

Interim Religious Education Town Hall
Designed by Steven Mead

“If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading”
— [Gautama Buddha](#)

Why Are We Doing A Town Hall?

The Religious Educator Search Town Hall is vital church work where we will engage in two tasks: 1) help shape our future Religious Education and Lifelong Learning programs and 2) guide our *Lifespan Religious Education Director (LRED) Search Committee* as we prepare to search for new, professional religious education leadership. When we are finished, we will have a “product” to give to the Search Committee for their use. Let your voice be heard!

- A light luncheon will be served; donations (\$5-10) gratefully accepted
- Children and youth ages 8 and up are welcomed *and included* in this process
- Childcare through age 7 in the nursery

What Are We Going to Do?

Well, we’re going to listen to one another while we. . .

1. **Discover** and explore our changing Religious Education and Lifelong Learning landscape
2. **Dream** and articulate a vision of the future that we want
3. **Design** the principles and propositions our vision needs
4. **Imagine**—what kind of professional religious educator will help make our vision become our destiny?

How Are We Going to Do This?

The gifts needed to accomplish this are in this congregation right now. Our purpose is to appreciate what is good and best about our program today, and building on this strength, imagine a future of joy, possibility, and hope. Listen to one another with appreciation. We are inviting you to participate by sharing your highest aspirations for First Unitarian Church. What will you have us set our heart to in our RE programs?

Directions

1. Break up into four-five equal groups (of 8 or); one group to a table

2. We will have five “sessions”—the first four of 15 min duration each; and the last of 30 min
3. During each 15 min session, converse about the questions; please include our children in these discussions!
4. At the end of each session, agree on common themes, points of agreements, and write them down. We will post what you write, and review as a larger group at the end of each discovery session
5. You may elect to move to a different table for each session (you get to meet more people that way)
6. We will conclude with a short summation period
7. Please help set the room back in order for the next use!

Conversation #1 Discovery

The purpose of Session #1 is to share reminisces about what in your past experience with the First Unitarian Religious Education or Adult Faith Development (or another Unitarian Universalist church experience) was transformative. Vital. Significant. Valuable.

Adult Questions

- Tell a story of something in religious education or adult faith development that really worked for you (your child), pick something you'd like to see continue and developed. To include as you remember and then tell as part of the story:
- What were the circumstances of that event/time/success in RE?
- How did it affect your (your child's) life?
- What were the conditions that contributed to making that possible?
- Why was it memorable, valuable?

Child Questions

- What has been your most favorite thing that you ever did in RE? Why was it your favorite?
- Can you tell me a story about your favorite thing?
- What do you like learning most in RE?
- What do you like doing most? Why?

Conversation #2 Dream

The purpose of Session #2 is to imagine a vision and future for Religious Education and Adult Lifelong Learning that we want.

Adult Questions

Imagine a time in the future when people look back on our community as an exceptional example of a thriving, attractive RE program, where mission and vision guides our activities, and where people of all ages are engaged in religious education and faith development initiatives.

In this exciting future,

- How are people engaged in religious education? Why?
- What kinds of programs are engaging us?
- What is sustaining our engagement?
- What might you be most proud of doing that helped this new future coming into being?

Child Questions

- A fairy princess has just granted you three wishes to use for RE class.
- You can use one wish for a teacher, one wish for something to learn, and one wish for something to do. What would you wish for? Why? [Adults, try and guide their answers to something formative that we adults can use to re-imagine things.]
- Can you draw a three-panel cartoon about what these three wishes might look like?

Conversation #3 Design

The purpose of Session #3 is to design through dialog the principles, provocative propositions, and ideals that we must embed into our program to create the future vision that we imagined in Conversation #2.

Child Questions

Imagine yourself as a Dr. Suess character. What BIG words would you be shouting about Religious

Adult Questions

This is a long list—pick what speaks to you most. . .

- How could our efforts lift up the individual yet resist individualism? How

Education classes from your book?
 What would you be doing in your
 book? Can you draw it for us?
 "O Deep Thought computer," he said,
 "the task we have designed you to
 perform is this. We want you to tell
 us...." he paused, "The Answer."
 "The Answer?" said Deep Thought.
 "The Answer to what?"
 "Life!" urged Fook.
 "The Universe!" said Lunkwill.
 "Everything!" they said in chorus.
 Deep Thought paused for a moment's
 reflection.
 "Tricky," he said finally.
 — *Douglas Adams, The Hitchhiker's
 Guide to the Galaxy*

- do we better balance the emphasis
 between the individual and community?
- In what ways might our programming
 develop not just the individual, but
 create “members of a community that
 will, in turn, influence the wider world?”
 - What elements belong in our religious
 education programming that counteracts
 our acculturation concerning
 customization and consumerism?
 - How could our programs better
 accommodate our transient and mobile
 society?
 - How might our programs better align
 with today’s diverse family structures?
 - How could we create “safe spaces and
 structured opportunities for seekers to
 come together and share [their] search by
 leveraging networks that people already
 belong to, and nurturing new networks
 among parishioners and between
 congregations?”
 - In response to the growing proportion of
 spiritual but not religious (who are not
 looking at *all* to attend a church) how
 might we “move beyond our
 congregational walls to meet people
 where they are at?”
 - How might our religious education
 program speak to over-scheduled
 children and increased expectations that
 children and youth will participate in
 diverse extra-curricular activities?
 - What might our program look like if it
 was better designed to respond to the
 sharp decline in parents who are willing
 and able to teach in our religious
 education program?
 - How might our programs address the
 increasing number of “un-churched”
 entering our community? In what ways
 could we intentionally teach the frontiers
 of congregational commitment?
 - In what ways could our program
 intentionally and deliberately support the
 needs of all the generation cohorts at

First Unitarian, particularly new ways we need to adapt our model to Millennial and GenX families?

Conversation #4 Destiny | Imagine!

The purpose of this last conversation is to explore what kind of religious education professional could make this vision we have today a reality?

Adult Questions

- What kind of character?
- What kind of qualifications?
- A creator? A designer? A program manager?
- How much of a risk taker?
- How much experience? Of what kinds?
- Introvert? Extrovert?
- Experience working in a team environment?
- How resilient? Resourceful? Versatile? Approachable? Principled? Industrious? Passionate? Innovative?
- What would you want them accountable for besides running a core program? Curriculum development? Child-care coordination? Coming of age program? Youth program coordination? Strategic planning? Intergenerational worship? Small group ministry? Campus ministry/young adult ministry? Family ministry? Adult lifelong learning? Pastoral care/counseling? Interfaith or social justice activities? Community-building activities?
- Of the preceding, agree on five of the most important to your group

Child Questions

- You are the casting director for a new multi-million dollar movie about First Unitarian Church Religious Education.
- What kind of movie would it be?
- Who would you cast in the lead role? What would they be like?
- What would they do on screen? Would they ride a horse? Wave a magic wand? Drive a taxicab? Speak six languages?
- Can you draw a scene with your lead actor in it?

And the Most Important Question of All!

The Unofficial IMDb LRED Survey

Who would you rather have for a new religious education director?

1. Pooh Bear or Tigger? (Winnie the Pooh)
2. Thor or Captain America? (The Avengers, et al.)
3. Felonius Gru or the Minions (Despicable Me, et al.)
4. Woody or Buzz Lightyear? (Toy Story)
5. The Roadrunner or Wiley Coyote? (Warner Bros)
6. Dot or Wacko Warner? (Animaniacs)
7. Peter Rabbit or Benjamin Bunny? (B. Potter)
8. Horton or the Grinch? (Dr. Suess)
9. Merida or Fergus? (Brave)
10. Mr. Incredible or Edna E. Mode? (Incredibles)
11. James P. "Sulley" Sullivan or Mike Wazowski? (Monsters, Inc.)
12. Mary Poppins or Bert? (Mary Poppins)
13. Tinkerbell or Captain Hook? (Peter Pan)
14. Wallace or Gromit? (Wallace & Gromit)
15. Wall-E or Eve? (Wall-E)
16. Burt or Ernie? (Sesame Street)
17. Harry Potter or Severus Snape? (Harry Potter)
18. Miracle Max or Fezzik? (Princess Bride)
19. Alice or the Red Queen? (Alice in Wonderland)
20. Superman or Lois Lane? (Superman)

Well? Whom would *you* most like as your next LRED?

These Town Hall questions are inspired by the work of Karen Bellavance Grace, 2013 Fahs Fellow for Innovation in Multigenerational Faith Formation from her work in [*Full Week Faith: Rethinking Religious Education and Faith Formation Ministries For Twenty-First Century Unitarian Universalists.*](#)

**Come, open to be moved. Come, be held in mutual embrace.
Come, engage the world. Come and be made whole.**

