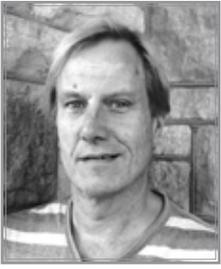


MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH



The Importance of Being

Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries

My dad was never not earnest. I simply cannot visualize him being conflicted or half-hearted about what he was doing. Speaking into a bullhorn on the picket line, teaching Sunday school, showing

me how to put my fingertips on the football's laces in order to put spin on my passes. I have unbound respect for the integrity he showed in his highly political labor union work, for his leadership at church, for how he approached being a husband and father. For the care he took of the house, the yard, our cars. For how he taught me to do and to be.

His integrity was not always easy to live with. His certainty when I was young was inspiring and comforting; less so when I felt unequal to his judgement as I entered adulthood and made my own way. I began to see him as rigid, simple, plodding. I would live my life more considerate of complexity and the unknown and what was possible if I was just a bit more open to anything. He had wasted too much of his life always trying to do the narrowly defined right thing.

And then I had kids, and started to understand why it all mattered so much. I have felt the pressure to curate my legacy, and been absolutely convinced I will never be thought of in the same way — I will not measure up as possessing that type of integrity. My kids will, I am mostly confident of this, think well of me and appreciate my efforts. They won't see me as a bastion of certainty in anything beyond my insistence that it's always worthwhile to try to be funny.

As I write this, I'm in a reality that is changing every 12 hours at least, and I cannot imagine what will be happening with the COVID pandemic when this newsletter gets to you. I am shook — I'm not at a point of dread or doom, I'm just completely uncertain. I wish I knew what to say to my kids, what exactly I and they should be doing. I struggle to balance my ideals for hope, community, and justice with fear and defensiveness and a need to protect my own. My kids are going to be learning some very real lessons right now, they are going to know some things about me whether I like it or not. They will see very quickly whether my spiritual sermonizing and moral preaching is real or not.

Yesterday I took a chance with my skeptical, way too cool and contained for me son, and told him I was absolutely clear that I knew I had unavoidable responsibility to my family. That the family started with the four of us, but that I was also aware of how many other people were important to me, and how my actions needed to be in support of them all. That there was no time for my self-absorption. He nodded his head — not like "yeah right" but like "yes, I get that." It makes breathing easier feeling our kids don't need us to be unquestionably certain with unshakeable integrity. They do need to know we're aware of what is "integral" in how we move forward.

Religious Education: Staying Connected

Please stay connected as we adapt to unfolding circumstances, migrating programs online and exploring best practices for our children and families. For now, some notes to orient and guide our next steps:

The worship team continues to shape best practices to live stream Sunday worship, and attention to children and families remains a formative part of that process. Similarly so for Wellspring Wednesday programming. Please stay connected here: www.unityunitarian.org.

We have always held to our core conviction that parents are the primary spiritual directors of their children, shaping our overarching aspiration in Religious Education to more closely connect church and home. We ask the vast majority of our teachers and volunteers who are parents to practice living into their role as spiritual directors at home, with much of our curricula already available online at www.unityunitarian.org/teacher-resources.html

- **Spirit Play (ages 3-6):** We hope to have video storytelling available for upcoming Sundays, for parents to view and wonder together with your children. We have also uploaded Mealtime and Bedtime Rituals for the home (developed by the UU Families Initiative), as wonderful resources to embed UU rituals into family life.
- **Rotations (grades 1-6):** Curriculum is online, with many lessons that can be adapted for the home. We are hoping to schedule Sunday Zoom gatherings, for children and teachers in each class to connect and share. Watch for email invitations to join.
- **Junior High (grades 6-8):** Curriculum is online (and link for video series will be sent for youth enrolled in Intro to Islam class). We are hoping to schedule Sunday Zoom gatherings, for youth and teachers in each class to connect and share. Watch for email invitations to join.
- **Our Whole Lives, Coming of Age, and Tower Club** gatherings are signature programs for older youth with more complex elements and schedules. Please stay tuned as teachers and staff coordinate next steps.

The Religious Education Ministry Team and R.E. staff will continue to discern next steps and update. We know that the coming weeks are woven with spring break (already for some) and that April is threaded with Easter and several culminating events in R.E. Please don't hesitate to contact R.E. staff with questions/concerns. We will make our way, as we have always done, present to/for/with one another.