

Agenda for the RE Teacher & Youth Group Advisor Retreat January 12, 2013

10:00-10:45 Breakfast and name tag making (Fesenden Hall)

Folks will be asked to make a name tag. In one corner, they will write the name of an influential teacher/mentor in their life. In another corner, they will write a word (or a few words) that describe that teacher.

10:45-11:30 Large Group Time (sanctuary)

Welcome and review of the agenda

Chalice Lighting:

“Nature herself does not distinguish between what seed it receives. It grows whatever seed is planted; this is the way life works. Be mindful of the seeds you plant today, as they will become the crop you harvest.”

Mary Morrissey

A reminder about dedicating our RE year in memory of Gordon Vars

Litany from the “seeds” we hoped to plant in the fall (from our RE Ingathering in early fall)

Love of learning through story

Love for RE time

To encourage creative expression

Increase appreciation of diversity

Valuing ideas of children as real and meaningful in the world around them

Your life, every life makes a difference

Compassion, love and peace in our relationships with others and the world

A love of theatre and drama

To bring the children into a loving awareness of the world outside of their family, community, city, and church

Appreciation of the significance of family in their lives and the lives of others

Everyone can do simple things to be more green

Social action

Paths to thoughtful actions

Knowledge and responsibility

Why we are UU

Independent thought

Excellence
An understanding of covenantal community
Learning in an environment of loving and respect

Going around the circle, people will introduce themselves, share what class they teach, name their mentor/teacher and share the descriptive words about them.

Thanking Our Influential Teachers Activity (from “Spirit of Life” curriculum):

Begin with this reading from Albert Schweitzer....

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to thing with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

Explain that each of us has cause for gratitude to those who have been teachers, mentors, and role models for us—those who have helped us become who we are today.

Say:

“In this activity, you will have the opportunity to express gratitude to your teachers, mentors, and role models. Expressing gratitude is a spiritual practice, even when this gratitude is not communicated to the recipient.”

Distribute Handout. Invite participants to read the directions. Participants should fill out the front first, and then write their personal "thank you" on the back.

Explain that participants will share their writing with a partner after the reflection and writing time has ended. This is important to note, so that participants do not write something that is too private to share.

Allow 7-8 minutes for participants to reflect and write.

Invite participants to find a partner, preferably with someone they do not know well. If you have an odd number of participants, invite one group to form a triad.

Say:

“You are invited to take turns sharing your letter of thanks, while the other(s) listens attentively. After each speaker finishes, let there be a moment of silence between you. When you have each (or all three) shared, express gratitude to one another and rejoin the circle.”

Allow three or four minutes for pairs or triads to share.

When the whole group has re-gathered, initiate discussion with these questions:

What was it like to reflect on and express gratitude in this way?
Would anyone like to share their letter of thanks? (just time for a few)a
How is gratitude a spiritual practice?
In what ways did you feel a spirituality in the act of focusing on your
gratitude to teachers, mentors, or role models?
How can expressing our gratitude affect our spirits?
How about receiving someone else's gratitude?
What will you carry forward from this activity?

Closing Words:

One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.

Carl Jung

11:30-12:30 Team Time (classrooms)

12:30-1:00 Closing Worship (sanctuary)

Chalice Lighting:

May we be reminded here of our highest aspirations, and inspired to bring our gifts of love and service to the altar of humanity.

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings but connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe, to this community and to each other.

Anonymous

Sharing:

How have you been inspired this morning and what gifts do you bring?

Song: *Spirit of Life* #123

Closing Reading:

Love In The Classroom

Afternoon. Across the garden, in Green Hall,
someone begins playing the old piano—
a spontaneous piece, amateurish and alive,
full of a simple, joyful melody.
The music floats among us in the classroom.
I stand in front of my students
telling them about sentence fragments.
I ask them to find ten fragments
in the twenty-one sentence paragraph on page forty-five.
They've come from all parts
of the world — Iran, Micronesia, Africa,
Japan, China, even Los Angeles — and they're still
eager to please me. It's less than half
way through the quarter.
They bend over their books and begin.
Hamid's lips move as he follows
the tortuous labyrinth of English syntax.
Yoshie sits erect, perfect in her pale make-up,
legs crossed quick pulse minutely
jerking her right foot. Tony,
from an island in the south Pacific,
sprawls limp and relaxed in his desk.
The melody floats around and through us
in the room, broken here and there, fragmented,
re-started. It feels mid-eastern, but
it could be jazz or the blues — it could be
anything from anywhere.
I sit down on my desk to wait,
and it hits me from nowhere — a sudden
sweet, almost painful love for my students.
"Never mind, "I want to cry out.
"It doesn't matter about fragments.
Finding them or not. Everything's
a fragment and everything's not a fragment.
Listen to the music, how fragmented,

how whole, how we can't separate the music
from the sun falling on its knees on all the greenness,
from this movement, how this moment
contains all the fragments of yesterday
and everything we'll ever know of tomorrow!"
Instead, I keep a coward's silence.
the music stops abruptly;
they finish their work,
and we go through the right answers,
which is to say
we separate the fragments from the whole.

Al Zolynas