

Dear Families with Rising 8th and 9th graders at Edmonds UU Church,

I am so pleased to let you know that after much careful consideration, a plan has emerged for youth programming next year and into the future. A 'Wisdom Group' convened to discern the best of all possibilities given history, space, resources, convenience and most importantly, strengthening the programming for our youth. This group was comprised of a Parent, Youth Advisor, Coming of Age (CoA) Leader, Children's Religious Education (CRE) Committee representative, and Supporting Advisors and Youth (SAY) Committee representatives, along with the Minister and Director of Lifespan Religious Education (DLRE).

The following bullet points outline the plan. More explanatory narrative follows and a chart format is attached.

- 2011-2012 will be a transition church year for the new configuration.
- Rising 8th and 9th grade programming will be CoA on Sundays – 10:30 a.m. to Noon 3 times per mo.
- Bridging into Senior High Youth group will occur for these youth in early spring 2012, creating our last grade 9-12 youth group for 2012-2013.
- Starting in 2012-2013 CoA will be grade 9 only – with 9th graders bridging into Sr. High Youth Group in early spring.
- Sr. High Youth Group will be grades 10-12 starting in 2013-2014.

Because such a small percentage of 9th graders continue in the youth group program, discerning a plan that better serves the needs of youth and increases the probability of continuing participation in Youth Group by the rising younger members was a priority. In addition, historically, some youth are very ready for CoA at grade 8, and many are not. After consulting with colleagues who run Youth Programs grades 10-12, and in combination with all the variety of considerations within the EUUC system, shifting the age up one year emerged as the best plan for us. We'll try it for a few years, assessing and adjusting along the way.

The coming two church years will be transition years. Current 7th and 8th graders (rising 8th and 9th graders) will engage in the Coming of Age program from September to March in the 2011-2012 church year and be bridged into Senior High youth group in the Spring of 2012. CoA is not a prerequisite for entering youth group – but the shift in timing will apply to all youth. Youth electing not to participate in CoA have the options of participating with the Fireworks class or attending service. In 2012-2013, the participants of the 8th/9th CoA class and other 9th grade youth will form the last grades 9-12 youth group. In subsequent years, youth will enter Senior High youth group as 9th graders, (rising 10th graders) in the early spring of the year.

Coming of Age will be offered each year for grade nine. OWL will continue to be offered in alternating years. It is anticipated that the youth being served by these two programs will have very little if any cross over in demographics. Most youth take OWL as 7th or 8th graders, thus the difficulties of youth being in both programs at the same time is no longer an issue.

An additional benefit emerged for this shift. Many 9th graders are beginning their high school careers and thus are entering a world of big adjustments. By making this change in program years at EUUC, the 9th graders have some months to stay with their bonded peer group, engaged in the CoA process and don't have to be adjusting to Sr. High youth group as well. The move in the spring gives them time to transition with a very intentional process over the months, rather than bridging abruptly in late spring then having no Youth Group participation for months. The historic results have been that very few of the ninth graders return to Youth Group. We hope this shift will address this situation. The plan is to do the bridging in early spring, in time for them to be eligible to be sponsored by EUUC for attending Spring Conference events if they wish.

Thank you for your forbearance and patience. I am aware that families and youth have been wondering what would be happening. I've included the above information in a chart of [Children and Youth Programs](#). If you have any questions please, as always, be in touch.

Yours in Religious Becoming,
Layne Richard-Hammock
Director of Lifespan Religious Education and Faith Development