

Quarterlifers Annual Report 2021
Submitted by Ashley Spinks Dugan, coordinator

Over the past year, I've had the great pleasure of leading the congregation's Quarterlifers social group. The group stayed somewhat active despite the pandemic by utilizing video-conferencing platforms and, when weather permitted, planning gatherings outdoors, where physical distancing was possible.

Any member or friend of the congregation between the ages of ~ 20-40 is welcome to attend Quarterlifers events, although we only have a handful of "active" members of the group. The purpose of the group is to foster community, provide social opportunities and offer support among young adult members. To that end, we focused primarily on events such as potlucks, hikes, and meetings for meals/drinks at local establishments.

However, a subgroup of the Quarterlifers also launched in May 2020 to great success! Beginning last spring, some QLs began to meet once/week on Saturday mornings to discuss a novel we read together, and we called the group our "Book Club." To date, we've read four books together and plan to continue! For the majority of that time, we held Book Club meetings on Zoom, although recently we've transitioned to in-person, outdoor meetings at UUC or Heritage Park. The only nominal expenses incurred by the group this year were paid by me, for snacks at these in-person meetings.

I'd mark the formation of the Book Club as a success of the QLs this year. Not only did it create community and maintain a small but dedicated attendance, but it fostered meaningful conversations about our faith, and theology, philosophy and literature more broadly.

We also had gatherings at UUC and Heritage Park that were fairly well-attended. We established a texting group-chat that is active and where members share life news, announcements, interesting articles, or ideas for upcoming events.

However, I'll go into the next year as chair of the Quarterlifers having learned a few lessons. First, somewhat counterintuitively, surveying for convenient event dates is not productive! Several events that fellow members suggested simply wouldn't come to fruition when I'd try to start the planning process by finding a commonly-acceptable date. Too few (if any) people respond to these kind of inquiry emails to make them useful. You have to just set the date, and hope people who are able will come!

Second, I accidentally created some feelings of exclusion or preference by planning events via our group chat, which only includes a dozen or so of the most active QLs, rather than planning via the listserv. The listserv reaches hundreds of former, current and potential QLs and was curated with the help of former QLs leaders Patrick & Kim Feucht, as well as Isabel Berney. Although response rates tend to be low via the listserv, especially when compared with the very engaged members (and my personal friends) on the group text, in the future I need to be more thoughtful about including all congregants in my planning of and invitation to QLs events.

My goal for next year is to plan more regular events. Patrick & Kim had established a goal of one event/month before handing the group over to me, and we did not meet that standard. This was partly due to the pandemic creating meeting restrictions, and partly my own lack of organization and consistent outreach to the group.

In the future, I'll be more diligent about planning these monthly meet-ups, because I think QLs supports UUC's broader mission to celebrate the inherent worth and dignity of all people and to create compassionate community. Speaking from experience, young adulthood can be a very lonely time during which forming meaningful friendships is difficult. But it's also a period of significant tumult and uncertainty, when you need friends the most! I hope QLs helps young adults feel more connected to the congregation and surrounded by loving friendships that celebrate and support who they are.