

April 28, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

As requested in the 2008 General Assembly Responsive Resolution *Youth and Young Adult Empowerment Resolution: Accountability*, the following is a report from the Office of Young Adult Ministries on our planning, implementation, results, and recommendations regarding the four points referenced in the resolution during the 2009 Fiscal Year.

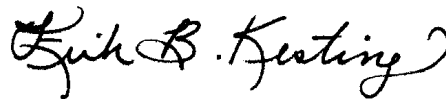
The Office of Young Adult Ministries advocates, educates, trains and develops resources for young adults and those engaged with young adult ministry with a commitment to creating multigenerational, culturally diverse, anti-racist, anti-oppressive institutions, communities, and ministries. We hope to secure and perpetuate a meaningful, enjoyable, and empowering experience for all Unitarian Universalist young adults.

The following is not an exhaustive inventory of our activity supporting the goals of the 2008 resolution; however, we believe it will provide substantive insight into our efforts. We welcome your feedback and look forward to continuing our shared ministry together.

Sincerely,



Nancy DiGiovanni



Erik B. Kesting

Acting Co-Directors of Young Adult Ministries

Topic 1: Invite ministerial support to youth and young adults through inclusive worship and intentional presence.

Increasing ministerial support for young adults, creating more inclusive worship practices, and developing greater intentionality behind our ministry call for a cultural shift in our denomination. The burden of this shift rests not on a few but on us all. Therefore, our planning on this topic primarily sought to accomplish the following:

1. Provide congregational, district, and denominational leaders with the skills, analysis, and resources to provide relevant and meaningful ministry to young adults.
2. Support congregations in becoming fully welcoming to young adults.
3. Provide accessible resources and networks that will promote and facilitate this cultural shift.
4. Where possible, provide or support direct ministry to young adults whose pastoral needs are otherwise not met by a local or district community.

One way in which the Office of Young Adult Ministries invited ministerial support to young adults in Fiscal Year 2009 was by attending and advocating for young adults at various continental and district leadership events and committee meetings. The following is a sampling of those events:

- Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) Fall Conference
- Excellence in Ministry Summit
- Youth Ministry Working Group Meetings
- General Assembly
- Unitarian Universalist University Planning
- Allies for Racial Equity Annual Conference
- Diverse Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries Asian/Pacific Islander Caucus Annual Conference
- Metro New York District Pastoral Care for Religious Educators Conference
- Thomas Jefferson District Annual Meeting
- Central Midwest District Annual Assembly
- Joseph Priestly District Racial Justice Conference
- Addictions Ministry Task Force
- Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network (UUMN) Annual Conference

The Office staff advocated among other Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) staff through direct collaboration and at meetings such as Congregation Services Staff Group Meetings, Communications Committee Meetings, Staff Team for Accessibilities and Anti-Racism (STAAR) Meetings, and more. The Office holds joint meetings with the UUA Youth Ministries Office on a monthly basis to work together on projects relevant to youth and young adults and to exchange ideas and best practices when applicable. Additionally, the staff provided direct consultation to congregations and districts throughout the Association on improving ministry to young adults and developing inclusive worship and other congregational practices.

The Campus Ministry Advisory Committee provided feedback, suggestions and information about the campus ministry initiatives of the office. This group of committed individuals convened for conference calls with Young Adult Ministries Office staff and offered their opinions and experiences as a measure of accountability to the larger young adult community and the professional and lay staff who serve them.

While the work of our office is very much that of ministry, we cannot provide direct pastoral care to all young adults. For those whose spiritual needs are not met by a local Unitarian Universalist community, we support the Church of the Larger Fellowship in their successful efforts to provide ministry to young adults through the Church of the Younger Fellowship. This year, Church of the Larger Fellowship received the first of three annual installments of a professional grant from our office that will total \$36,000 to help them provide outstanding staff for their youth and young adult ministry through Church of the Younger Fellowship.

Topic 2: Invest financial support in youth and young adult leadership bodies and programs when viable.

Financial support is often the hallmark of intention. Since the mission of our office is to support and improve young adult and campus ministry, virtually all of our programmatic funding supports young adult programs. We expect our total programmatic expenses for the Office of Young Adult Ministries in Fiscal Year 2009 to come to approximately \$120,000. This total does not include salaries for our three staff members—two Co-Directors and one Office Administrator—but does include approximately \$41,750 in grants made to districts and congregations. These grants are used to promote and strengthen young adult ministry, provide leadership development and training opportunities for young adults, fund young adult ministry staff positions, and more. By collecting interim and final reports for the projects we fund, we are able to observe and analyze obstacles and successes in young adult ministry throughout the denomination. All past and current grant recipients are listed online at UUA.org/leaders/youngadults/128891.html.

Office staff coordinated with UUA Stewardship and Development Staff Group on several occasions. Staff also prepared a follow-up report to analyze the pilot program of the Summer of Spirituality and Service and engaged staff from a potential host district around the viability of implementing the program at the district level.

Regarding continental or denominational young adult leadership bodies, we expect that the new Youth and Young Adult Ministries Office will continue to dialogue with C*UUYAN about what relationship between the two will be most beneficial to our shared ministry.

Topic 3: Provide support for youth and young adult staff and volunteers to receive suitable training and resources, including self-directed anti-racism and anti-oppression trainings.

A main part of the mission of the Office of Young Adult Ministries is to educate, train, and provide resources to young adults and those engaged in young adult ministry, including in anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism. We therefore planned to continue to provide these trainings and resources during Fiscal Year 2009.

Fall Training and Meeting Event

The Office hosted a training October 10-12, 2008 open to leaders from throughout the denomination. Congregational, district, and association level staff and volunteers came together to discuss present realities, obstacles, and opportunities around young adult ministries and to strategize next steps for collaboration. The twenty-two attendees included district staff members, C*UUYAN Steering Committee

members, congregational and campus ministers, directors of religious education, and young adult and adult lay leaders. Major topics of discussion included:

- Analysis of and strategic planning for collaboration among the associational, district, and local levels of service
- Developing anti-racist, anti-oppressive, multicultural competencies and community
- The gathered group prioritized these three broad questions and addressed them in small groups as a whole
 - How can we engender or bring about a culture change to a culture in which young adults are fully welcomed and fully integrated in all aspects of congregational life?
 - How can we improve our ministry to and with bridgers?
 - How can we create and sustain vibrant new and current campus ministries?

Attendees reported that the event was a successful and important networking opportunity that they hope will be provided again in the future. Important strategies for improved ministry and resources also emerged from the event including ideas on a new pre-bridging curriculum project, substantial revisions to the Bridge Connections Program, concrete steps to enact cultural change around young adult ministry, and more.

Electronic Communication

In order for young adult ministry leaders to communicate with and learn from each other more effectively, the Office of Young Adult Ministry revised and consolidated the email lists it makes available for the discussion of a variety of topics relevant to young adults and young adult ministry. For a complete list, visit <http://www.uua.org/members/youngadults/112286.shtml>.

Young Adult News is a monthly e-newsletter that contains information on upcoming events, job and volunteer opportunities, resources, and other news of particular import to Unitarian Universalist young adults. In Fiscal Year 2009 the Office began using a new format for the e-newsletter and began using Safe Unsubscribe® service.

The Office has also begun using social networking sites such as Facebook to communicate with constituents, advertise events, etc.

Direct Consultation

As mentioned in section one, Young Adult Ministries Office staff facilitated workshops at district events and provided direct consultation to congregations on young adult ministry.

ConnectUU: An Online Database for Youth and Young Adults

We continued to make improvements to ConnectUU.com, an online database hosted by the Office of Young Adult Ministries. This database has two functions: 1) it serves as an online directory of Unitarian Universalist young adult and campus ministry groups and events. Groups post and update their own group and event listings. 2) ConnectUU provides district staff with access to young adult constituent contact information for outreach and ministry. The Young Adult Ministries Office and the UUA Information Technology Services staff have been working on a synchronization process that matches and synchronizes records in the ConnectUU database with records in the UUA's main database. This is part of a larger vision of secure data management allowing congregations, districts, and campus ministries to stay in touch with

Unitarian Universalists throughout their young adult years and to better welcome and integrate young adults into the activities and leadership of the Association. The synchronization process has not yet been completed.

Print Resources

The Guide to Young Adult Ministry is a resource for ordained and lay leaders supporting young adult ministry. Topics addressed include welcoming and involving young adults in the congregation, young adult groups, pastoral needs of young adults, bridging youth into young adulthood, small group ministry with young adults, and more. The 2009 revision of *The Guide to Young Adult Ministry* contains updates including an article on the challenges of cross-cultural pastoral care, a bibliography of recommended reading, and more. It is available free online at UUA.org or in print from the Office of Young Adult Ministries.

The office also printed new full color campus ministry banners, a revised monograph on involving young adults in congregational life, and a revised *Young Adult Ministry Resource Catalogue*.

Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, and Multiculturalism Opportunities

One way in which the office seeks to provide young adults with anti-racism / anti-oppression / multicultural (ARAOMC) development opportunities is through the Groundwork program. Groundwork is the Association's youth and young adult anti-racism training and organizing program. Groundwork trainers facilitate dialogue, education and organizing in congregations, schools and community groups, and are available to lead workshops, trainings and conferences.

In November 2008 Young Adult Ministries staff joined other UUA staff and Groundwork trainers and mentors in a weekend roundtable meeting to discuss the future direction of the program. An evaluative report was commissioned from this meeting and a consultant researcher was hired in December 2008. The report was completed in March 2009 and shared with the Groundwork trainers and appropriate UUA Staff and consultants, as well as the leadership of Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM) and Unitarian Universalist Allies for Racial Equity (ARE). This report will help the new Youth and Young Adult Ministries Office improve and expand the ARAOMC training and programming opportunities available to youth and young adults.

Going forward, program support for Groundwork will be provided by the Program Associate for Youth and Young Adult Leadership Development with additional support from the Office Administrator. The new Youth and Young Adult Ministries Director will be involved in conversations and decisions about the long term future of Groundwork.

We also advocated for other UUA ARAOMC programming to better welcome and integrate young adults into their efforts, including bringing young adults into leadership positions in these programs. Our office provided scholarship money for young adults to attend the annual meeting of DRUUMM, ARE, and Interweave.

Bridge Connections

Since 2003 the Bridge Connections program has supported thousands of Unitarian Universalist youth crossing the bridge to adulthood by keeping them connected to Unitarian Universalism as they move through a time of significant transition. Building on the success of the program and feedback from young adults and district and local leaders, we introduced some changes to the program in 2009.

The first change was an end of the accompanying meditation manual and one-year subscriptions to *UUWorld* and *Quest*. The second change was that congregations no longer need to place orders or pay to participate; each congregation received packets of all necessary materials in February of 2009. Young adulthood is a time of immense transition. While some bridging youth will remain in the geographic and spiritual communities in which they spent their adolescent years, many will move to college, enter the Peace Corps or the military, or take a new job and create a new home. The Bridge Connections program allows the Unitarian Universalist Association and our district staff to make sure that there is a loving and open Unitarian Universalist community ready to welcome them wherever they may go by

Topic 4: Attend to the needs of youth and young adult constituents with marginalized identities by providing resources and opportunities within the congregation and at the district and associational levels.

The Office of Young Adult Ministries believes it is imperative that we attend to the needs of young adults with historically marginalized identities. Moreover, we must institutionalize this support in accountable ways. The UUA can provide this support in a number of ways including funding, resource development, and direct staff services.

Staff members of the Office of Young Adult Ministries have long advocated that the UUA hire a staff member whose primary portfolio would encompass ministry to and with young adults of color. Success came in late 2008 when the Youth and Young Adult Ministries Offices hired Rev. Dr. Monica Cummings as Program Associate for Youth and Young Adults of Color. Rev. Cummings will continue in this position in Fiscal Year 2010.

The Program Associate for Youth and Young Adults of Color job includes supporting and working with the DRUUMM Youth and Young Adult Steering Committee. Monica continues to make herself available and provide support to that group. She is profoundly invested in nurturing mindfulness around and providing professional support to our religious educators and district staff colleagues about the specific emotional and pastoral needs of youth and young adult of color in the denomination, particularly those who are transracially adopted. As part of her job, Rev. Cummings provides training and workshops on identity and spirituality development for young adults of color throughout the denomination.

The Office of Young Adult Ministries made funds available to Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries (DRUUMM) and Interweave to distribute as financial aid for young adults to attend the organizations' annual meetings. Our goals were to 1) provide immediate financial aid to young adults with historically marginalized identities in order to foster participation in these important communities and 2) encourage these denominational organizations to institutionalize financial support for young adults. As mentioned earlier, funds were also made available for this purpose to Allies for Racial Equity.

Last but not least, office staff applied anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and multi-cultural (ARAOMC) lenses to their resource development, event planning, consultations, and other work. Staff members also worked to improve their ARAOMC analysis through participating in trainings and workshops and by reading appropriate literature on developing an anti-racist identity.

Recommendations

As requested by the General Assembly resolution, we are including in this report some of our recommendations regarding young adult ministry. We recommend that:

- The governing bodies of Unitarian Universalist institutions (e.g. congregations, districts, identity networks) increase young adult participation at their events and programming and welcome young adults into leadership positions in their organizations. This reflects the reality that young adult ministry is the responsibility of all and not a specialization of the few.
- Current leaders support and embrace the changes that accompany this new leadership.
- The UUA prioritize developing stronger information sharing systems and policies that enable collaboration with local and district staff (e.g. providing UUA district staff with access to the UUA's primary constituent database).
- Congregations ensure that young adults are represented as delegates to General Assembly and have access to other relevant spirituality and leadership development opportunities.
- Unitarian Universalist leaders in young adult ministry look to each other and to leaders in young adult ministry, education, psychology, and sociology outside of Unitarian Universalism for guidance and insight.
- Unitarian Universalist leaders prioritize and attend to the unique needs of young adults with historically marginalized identities.
- Ministers provide direct pastoral care to young adults and their families.
- Congregations implement relevant curriculum for bridging youth that supports faith and identity development and prepares them for the spiritual and life challenges of adulthood.
- The Ministerial Fellowship Committee and Religious Education Credentialing Committee review their policies and reading lists to ensure that our professional leaders understand and are well prepared to meet the diverse spiritual and developmental needs of today's young adults.
- Ministers, directors of religious education, and other religious professionals seek to provide programming and ministry that is spiritually vibrant, financially accessible, and deeply relevant to the lives of today's young adults.
- All Unitarian Universalists courageously call each other to develop multicultural competencies, live out our faith with justice and compassion, and foster unambiguous inclusion of young adults.
- Unitarian Universalist young adults everywhere continue to exhibit courage and conviction for their Unitarian Universalist faith as they navigate numerous life transitions, to lead our communities, and to persist in stewarding our movement towards multigenerational community.