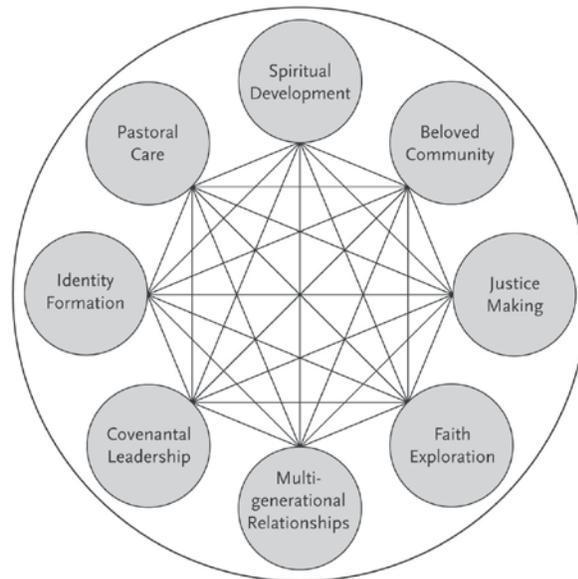


# The Web of Youth Ministry

A model for considering the balance in your youth programming, The Web of Youth Ministry presented below is adapted from the Renaissance Module *Ministry with Youth*.



## *Covenantal Leadership*

Youth leadership is a covenantal practice in which youth are safe, recognized and affirmed as full and vital participants in the life of our shared Unitarian Universalist faith community. Advisors encourage youth to take on more responsibility as they grow and develop. The goal is for youth to become empowered and effective leaders through intentional leadership development over time.

## *Multigenerational Relationships*

Multigenerational faith communities have programs that both meet the specific developmental needs of different age groups and bring people together across age groups. Dynamic youth ministry strives to connect youth with people of all ages through inviting them to help with religious

education programs, building mentor relationships between youth and adults, forming multigenerational choirs, allowing youth to use their leadership gifts in worship services and workshops, celebrating life milestones such as Coming of Age and bridging into adulthood, and having fun outdoor retreats open to all families and ages.

### *Spiritual Development*

This is the intentional cultivation of spirituality through both individual and group spiritual practices. As spiritual beings, youth experience awe, gratitude, wonder, appreciation and “at-one-ness.” Youth ministry should encourage and offer opportunities for engagement in practices that nurture and enliven their spirits.

### *Beloved Community*

Being held in the arms of a beloved community is an essential part of being a religious person of any age. In youth ministry, beloved community has three dimensions: local, Unitarian Universalist, and interfaith. Youth should be grounded in a local community that creates deep, affirming, authentic and long-lasting relationships. Through camps and conferences, youth can connect with the wider Unitarian Universalist faith movement and see the diversity of experiences that exist within Unitarian Universalism. Interfaith community enriches youth ministry and celebrates differing religious perspectives found in the world.



### *Justice Making*

Youth practice answering our faith’s calling to work for justice and to be in solidarity with others who also work for justice in many settings, including in our lives, our local communities, and the wider world. Service trips can help open youth’s eyes to the realities confronting other people and inspire them to work for justice. Organizing a social justice project within the congregation can connect youth to the rest of the congregation and place youth as leaders in the social justice work of the community. Youth can also engage in advocacy and education around social justice issues that are important to them.

### *Pastoral Care*

Like people of all ages, youth have specific pastoral needs that are met in communities where people know how to listen deeply. Everyone works together to create a religious community that provides pastoral care with youth. This includes creating safe congregations, supporting youth who are in crisis, and celebrating their joys and accomplishments. Pastoral care with youth is also strengthened when ministers have a direct relationship with the youth in their congregations.

### *Faith Exploration*

Structured learning environments promote the free and responsible search for truth, meaning and purpose as a part of youth faith development. Faith exploration takes place when youth engage with workshops at camps and conferences, as well as through curricula that challenge youth to look deep and develop their faith. Because the Unitarian Universalist approach to religious education acknowledges that we are all both learners *and* teachers, when youth are asked to lead or facilitate education programs, it is a learning *and* leadership development opportunity.



### *Identity Formation*

Dynamic youth ministry supports youth in their journeys to figure out who they are as spiritual beings, relational beings, racial/ethnic and sexual beings, people of faith, justice makers, lifelong learners and leaders, as well as how they fit in multigenerational communities. Youth ministry helps youth develop a healthy identity in these areas and learn to live with integrity so that their Unitarian Universalist faith is inseparable from their identity as a whole person.