

The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth

Report to the UUA Board of Trustees

October 2006 (written September 12, 2006)

The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth has progressed well since the June 2006 meeting of the Board. The following are several areas where significant work has been done in recent months:

Youth Ministry Survey Results

The results of the successful UU Youth Ministry Survey were summarized and made widely available around the time of General Assembly. Detailed results as well as top-level summaries are now available on the Consultation's website, and a summary report (see supplemental materials) was mailed to every congregation. Results for each district will be available by November 2006, in time for the first district gathering on youth ministry. After discovering an inconsistency in the data and analyses received from the consultant, the initial data related to youth's spiritual needs have been corrected (70% of respondents, rather than 53%, say that district/regional youth ministry meets their spiritual needs).

Congregational Conversations

The deadline for congregational conversation report forms to be returned to the Task Force was extended to September 30, 2006. As of early September, the Youth Office had received report forms from over 70 congregations. We expect that well over 100 congregations will participate before the deadline, and others will hold one at another time. Feedback about the impact of these conversations on congregations has been overwhelmingly positive, and indicates that congregations are making changes to the ways they do youth ministry. A full report of the results will be included in the January 2007 Board packet.

District Gatherings on Youth Ministry

The supplemental materials to this packet include a schedule of district gatherings as of early September. District trustees are crucial participants in these intergenerational gatherings, so please mark your calendars and plan to attend! They will be facilitated by a youth-adult team from the Task Force. The process guide for district gatherings (updated in August) is available on the Consultation website.

Task Force Meeting

The Task Force on Youth Ministry met in Boston in late July to evaluate the work of the 2005-2006 year and plan for the next. Task Force members learned about the survey results and preliminary congregational conversation results, reflected on the implications of data for the process, began planning for the Summit, and discussed the role of various stakeholders in the next year of the Consultation process. The Task Force also crafted working definitions for "youth ministry" and "youth empowerment" (see supplemental materials), which they will share with stakeholder groups over the next year and solicit feedback on. The second half of the meeting included several youth and adult volunteers not serving on the task force, who were invited to help facilitate district gatherings. This group received training and practice for planning and facilitating these conversations. The meeting minutes are now online at www.uua.org/TRUS/youth/taskforce.html.

Planning for the Summit on Youth Ministry

At the July meeting, the Task Force did some initial thinking about the Summit on Youth Ministry and formed a subgroup to plan the details of the event. The Summit will take place on July 16-20, 2007 in Boston. This fall, the Summit planning group will finalize the invite list of 50 people and reach out to these people via mail, phone, and e-mail to ask them to participate.

YRUU Stakeholder Conversation

At Youth Council in early August, the leadership of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) spent considerable time visioning and strategizing about the future of YRUU's youth ministry. They invited five recent YRUU leaders to help facilitate these discussions in five areas – Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression & Social Justice, Spirituality, Outreach, Youth-Adult Relations, and Governance/Structure. Out of each of these discussions came a series of resolutions, some of which they will implement themselves and others of which have been passed on to the Task Force.

CUC Stakeholder Conversation

Over Labor Day Weekend, the Canadian Unitarian Council held the Terre Commune – Winds of Change Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This re-visioning conference brought together 30 youth and adults from every Canadian region, the CUC Board, CUC staff, and UUA Youth and Young Adult staff. It was facilitated by a team of five including UUA staff member Beth Dana. Participants wrote and discussed a group of proposals addressing changes in Canadian youth ministry. These proposals will serve as directives to Canadian youth and adult leadership, as well as input into the Consultation process.

Supplemental Materials:

1. Youth Ministry Survey Summary Report
2. Consultation Postcard
3. Youth Ministry and Youth Empowerment – Working Definitions
4. Congregational Conversations Update
5. District Gatherings on Youth Ministry – Schedule



Unitarian Universalist Youth Ministry Survey Summary Report

A Report from the
Unitarian Universalist Association
Task Force on Ministry To and With Youth

June 2006

The Basics

Survey designed and analyzed by Market Voice Consulting

Number of surveys analyzed: 1,399

Average age of respondents: 15.2 years old

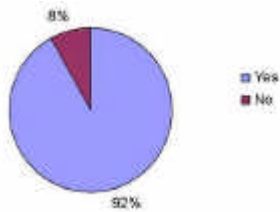
A SNAPSHOT OF YOUTH MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT

Respondents who participate in local **religious education and/or worship** **87%**
 Respondents who said their congregation has a **youth group** **92%**
 Respondents who are or have been **leaders in their youth group** **28%**

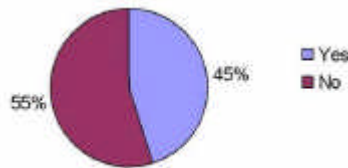
Respondents who are involved in **district/regional youth programs** **45%**
 Of those involved at the district/regional level, **28% are or have been in leadership positions.**

Respondents who are involved in **continental youth programs** **9%**
 Of those involved at the continental level, **23% are or have been in leadership positions.**

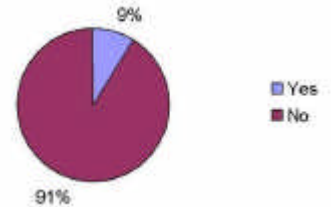
Congregational Youth Group



District/Regional Programs



Continental Programs



YOUTH MINISTRY SURVEY FINDINGS – FIVE KEY AREAS

Creating a Spiritual Home

The vast majority of youth report that, on all levels of youth ministry (local, district/regional, and continental), they feel welcome and respected. Most respondents also believe that youth ministry programs provide them with opportunities to learn new things, to get involved in their communities, and to develop leadership skills.

Despite the generally positive experiences, one area is lacking – spiritual development.

- ❖ Only 53% of respondents consider their congregation their spiritual home.
- ❖ Similarly, 53% of respondents say that their youth group meets their spiritual needs.
- ❖ Of respondents who are active at the district/regional level, 70% say that district/regional youth ministry meets their spiritual needs.
- ❖ At the continental level, proportionately more respondents (63%) say that it meets their spiritual needs.

Spiritual Beliefs and Congregational Influence

"I have no solid beliefs; I just believe that there is something greater than us humans out there. My congregation has shown me many beliefs, and given me ideas and started to lead me down the right path. The only reason I do not have a more concrete belief is that I have not fully figured out what I think." – Junior High Youth

"My personal congregation was very influential growing up. However, the past two years rendered the youth program hostile and ineffectual...The local church I attended supports in no way YRUU or any other UU youth programming and has become detrimental to many youths' attitudes toward youth programming as well as their spiritual and emotional growth..." – Senior High Youth

"I feel spiritually akin to all that lives, and find growth through many different vessels and spaces. The UU community has created a strong and safe community space for me to explore my own spirituality. The local YRUU program was extremely important to my spiritual development, as was the continental YRUU community." – Older Youth

"I consider myself a non-denominational Christian. I have felt that the adults in my congregation for the most part do not focus on or discuss spirituality in any relation to Christianity. I found my beliefs by my own search." – Older Youth

Question for reflection and dialogue:

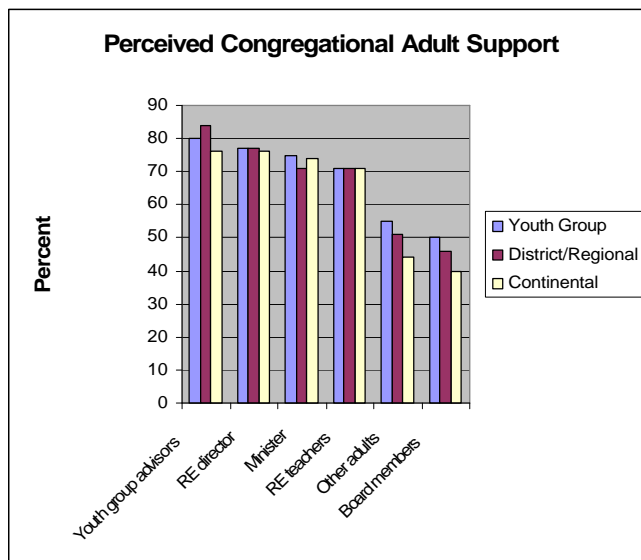
How can our ministry with youth help them to determine their spiritual needs, articulate their faith, and feel spiritually fulfilled?

Intergenerational Community and Youth-Adult Relations

Youth group advisors, religious education directors, ministers, and religious education teachers are rated highest on their support of youth ministry. However, only about half of respondents believe that other adults or their congregation's board members support youth ministry.

The lack of local adult support felt by respondents involved in local, district/regional and continental youth programs suggests that this involvement may cause youth to feel alienated from adults in their congregation.

- ❖ Respondents who participate in religious education programs feel more congregation-wide support than respondents who participate in youth group.
- ❖ Respondents involved at the district/regional and continental levels are 5-14% more likely to say that some adults in the congregation don't value their feelings and opinions.



Question for reflection and dialogue:

What aspects of youth groups, district/regional and continental youth programs are causing youth to feel alienated or isolated from adults in their congregation?

Priorities and Involvement

Involvement Beyond the Congregation

- ❖ Respondents involved with their congregation's youth programs are the most likely of all youth to participate at the district/regional level. Likewise, respondents who are local leaders are also more likely to participate at the district/regional and continental levels.
- ❖ District/regional youth program participants are more likely to be involved at the continental level.

Communication

About district/regional opportunities: The five communication channels used most frequently now are the same ones respondents say are most effective for finding out about district/regional activities – youth group advisor (if a local youth group exists), friends, email announcements, district/regional mailings, and the religious education director.

About continental opportunities: E-mail is the primary information source about continental youth programs, and is the channel that respondents prefer. Respondents would like to see more use of e-mail announcements and the YRUU website.

Disengaged Youth

Some youth choose to stop attending youth group or religious education, even if it's available in their congregation. Of these respondents:

- ❖ 50% got too busy to attend.
- ❖ 25% stopped attending because they didn't like the other youth in the program.
- ❖ 24% started attending worship services instead.

These results suggest that youth group/religious education did not meet the needs or engage the interest of these youth, and therefore they did not make it a priority in their lives.

Question for reflection and dialogue:

What motivates youth to become and remain actively involved in different types of youth ministry?

Junior High Youth

The average age of survey respondents was fairly low in the 12-20 range – 15.2 years old. Junior high youth (ages 12-14) made up about 37% of survey respondents. On the local level, junior high youth are much less involved in congregational activities than high school or older youth. The most common activities are: social action (28% of respondents) and leading or helping with worship services (26% of respondents).

Should junior high youth programming be separate from high school youth programming?		
According to:	Yes, separate district/regional	Yes, separate continental
Junior High	35%	36%
High School	61%	68%
Older	65%	43%

Access to Information, Resources, and Opportunities

- ❖ While most respondents (90%) high school age or older receive information about district, regional and continental opportunities, junior high youth are 11% less likely to receive this information.
- ❖ Junior high respondents depend more on locally-distributed information than older respondents to find out about opportunities.
- ❖ Junior high youth are less likely to be aware of and to use YRUU/UUA resources.

Question for reflection and dialogue:

How can we ensure that there are relevant opportunities and resources for junior high youth, and that this information reaches them, enabling them to be actively involved both within their congregation and in the larger UU community?

Welcoming All Youth

The response to the survey suggests that youth program participants are predominantly white, and the majority identify as girls or women. Girls/women are more likely to hold leadership positions. How does this affect whether our youth programs are welcoming to youth of diverse identities and backgrounds?

- ❖ **GLBTQQ Youth:** Respondents who reported their sexual orientation as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning are relatively more active in

youth groups and more likely to hold leadership positions. They also have higher levels of involvement throughout.

- ❖ **Youth of Color:** Respondents of color are most likely to participate at the continental level.
- ❖ **Transracially adopted youth:** Adopted youth who are of a different race than their adoptive parents made up 63% of all adopted respondents. They rated the youth group experience lower than other respondents – indicating less of a feeling of belonging, more of a sense of pressure to conform to beliefs and attitudes, and fewer opportunities to address social issues such as racism and oppression.

Question for reflection and dialogue:

How can congregations support the healthy racial identity development of youth?

Conclusions

Based on an analysis of the youth ministry survey results, the following changes are needed to create a stronger and more vibrant youth ministry in our Association.

- ❖ Better meet youth's spiritual development needs.
- ❖ Provide more opportunities for all youth to develop and practice leadership skills.
- ❖ Provide a variety of programming designed to meet the different interests and needs of junior high, senior high, and post high youth.
- ❖ Integrate youth programs more fully with other congregational activities, so that youth do not feel isolated or alienated.
- ❖ Do more to help youth explore how to deal successfully with life situations.
- ❖ Develop better locally-based resources and support for youth's spiritual, racial, and social identity development.

Youth ministry should be especially strong at the congregational level in order to provide youth with a spiritual home. Opportunities for youth to connect with youth in other congregations are an important aspect of youth ministry, but should not replace local connections.

Developing a successful and sustainable youth ministry is about commitment and involvement by adults as well as by youth.

Youth Ministry and Youth Empowerment – Working Definitions

The following working definitions were developed by the Task Force on Youth Ministry at the July 2006 meeting. They will be shared with districts and stakeholders over the next year to solicit feedback.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Unitarian Universalist youth ministry is a collaboration between youth and adults to create authentic, anti-racist, anti-oppressive,* multicultural, and intergenerational communities which empower and support:

- The spiritual and religious development of youth
- Mutual love, respect, and trust between and among youth and adults
- Relationship-based ministry and support among youth
- A youth-driven ministry of justice that calls all of us to live out our values in the world.

Like all ministry, ministry with youth is the responsibility of the whole congregation and the whole community.

“The great end in religious instruction...is not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own.” – William Ellery Channing

* Anti-racist and anti-oppressive communities are ones in which individuals actively work against individual and institutional racism and oppression while striving for safe, welcoming, and radically inclusive communities. The language of “anti-“ is used to emphasize the prevalence of oppression in the world. It is our calling as people of faith to actively dismantle oppression in Unitarian Universalist communities and the world at-large.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

A covenantal practice in which youth are recognized and affirmed as colleagues who are essential and vital to our faith community. A practice based on mutual respect and trust between youth and adults, youth and youth, as well as adults and adults. This practice encourages all to grow in a free and responsible way.

This is achieved by:

- A youth-adult partnership in all parts of decision making, including worship, resources and programming.
- Talking directly, openly and honestly with love and respect in that relationship.
- Mentoring relationships.
- Youth coming together to strengthen confidence, build collective voice, and realize a more robust expression of themselves.
- Recognizing youth ministry history as part of our collective history.

Congregational Conversations Update (as of 9/13/06)

The Task Force has received report forms from the following congregations. If a U.S. district or Canadian region is not listed, we have not received report forms from any of these congregations.

Ballou Channing District

First Universalist Society, Franklin, MA
Channing UU Church, Rockland, MA

British Columbia Region

North Shore Unitarian Church, West Vancouver, BC

Central Midwest District

Olympia Brown UU Church, Racine, WI
UU Church of Rockford, IL
First Unitarian Church, St Louis, MO

Clara Barton District

UU Society of Greater Springfield, MA
First Parish Church of Groton, Groton, MA

Florida District

Manatee UU Fellowship, Bradenton, FL
Spirit of Life UU, Odessa, FL
UU Church of Sarasota, FL

Heartland District

UU Church of Bloomington, IN
First Unitarian Church, Cincinnati, OH
Heritage UU Church, Cincinnati, OH
St. John's UU Church, Cincinnati, OH
Miami Valley UU Fellowship, Dayton, OH

Joseph Priestley District

UU Church of Annapolis, MD
UU Church of Arlington, VA
Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda, MD
River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD
Accotink UU Church, Burke, VA
Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA
Cedarhurst UUs, Finksburg, MD
UU Congregation of Fairfax, Oakton, VA
UU Congregation of Wyoming Valley, PA
UU Church of Rockville, MD
UU Church of Silver Spring, MD

BuxMont UU Fellowship, Warrington, PA

Massachusetts Bay District

First Church in Boston, MA
First Parish in Framingham, MA
First Religious Society, Newburyport, MA
First Parish of Watertown, MA
UU Society of Wellesley Hills, MA

New Hampshire/Vermont District

UU Church of Nashua, NH

Northeast District

The UU Society of Bangor, ME
First Universalist Church of Rockland, ME

Ohio Meadville District

West Shore UU Church, Cleveland, OH
First UU Church, Columbus, OH
First Unitarian of Pittsburgh, PA
UU Church of Meadville, PA
UU Fellowship of Wayne County, Wooster, OH
First Unitarian Church, Toledo, OH
Lyons First Unitarian Church, Lyons, OH

Pacific Central District

UU Fellowship of Northern Nevada, Reno, NV

Pacific Northwest District

Anchorage UU Fellowship, AK
Boise UU Fellowship, Boise, ID
Edmonds UU Church, Edmonds, WA
UU Community Church of Washington County, Hillsboro, OR
Evergreen UU Fellowship, Marysville, WA

Pacific Southwest District

Live Oak UU Congregation, Goleta, CA
UU Congregation of Phoenix, AZ, Paradise Valley, AZ
Granite Peak UU Congregation, Prescott, AZ
First UU Church of San Diego, CA
Conejo Valley UU Fellowship, Thousand Oaks, CA
UU Congregation of NW Tucson, AZ

Prairie Star District

UU Church of Minnetonka, Wayzata, MN

St. Lawrence District

UU Congregation of Binghamton, NY
First Unitarian of Ithaca, NY
First Unitarian Church of Rochester, NY
May Memorial UU Society, Syracuse, NY
UU Church of Amherst, Williamsville, NY

Southwest District

UU Church of Corpus Christi, TX
UU Fellowship of Fayetteville, AR
First Jefferson UU, Fort Worth, TX
First UU Church, Houston, TX
Northwest Community UU Church, Houston, TX
First Unitarian Church, Memphis, TN
First UU Church of San Antonio, TX

Thomas Jefferson District

Tennessee Valley UU Church, Knoxville, TN
Oak Ridge UU Church, Oak Ridge, TN
UU Church of Spartanburg, SC

District Gatherings on Youth Ministry – Schedule

District	Date
Ballou Channing	November 18, 2006
Central Midwest	April 13-15, 2007
Clara Barton	January 5-7, 2007 (tentative)
Florida	February 10, 2007
Heartland	May 11-13, 2007
Joseph Priestley	April 27-29, 2007
Massachusetts Bay	May 12, 2007
Metro New York	February 2-4, 2007
Mid-South	May 4-6, 2007
Mountain Desert	November 10-12, 2006
New Hampshire/Vermont and Northeast	May 19, 2007
Ohio-Meadville	February 23-25, 2007
Pacific Central	February 10, 2007
Pacific Northwest	March 23-25, 2007
Pacific Southwest	April 27-29, 2007
Prairie Star	April 13-15, 2007
St. Lawrence	January 12-14, 2007 (tentative)
Southwest	February 2-4, 2007
Thomas Jefferson	November 3-5, 2006