

Youth Ministry Task Force Meeting Minutes – July 25-29, 2006

Contents and Major Outcomes:

List of Taskforce Members and Meeting Attendees

Exploring and Defining Youth Ministry and Youth Empowerment

Reviewing Data

- ❖ Youth Ministry Survey
- ❖ Congregational Conversations

Implications of These Findings

Sharing Task Force Members' Experiences with Outreach and Workshops

How Stakeholders Can Advance This Work

Summit on Ministry To and With Youth

Preparation for District Gatherings on Youth Ministry

- ❖ Before the Gathering
- ❖ Logistics
- ❖ Format
- ❖ Facilitator Pairs and Assignments
- ❖ Presenting Data and Facilitating the Process
- ❖ After the Gathering
- ❖ Facilitator Time Commitment

Next Steps

Summary of Job Jots

Meeting Participants

Task Force Members:

Bill Sinkford – UUA President, Consultation Co-Convener

Megan Dowdell – Former Youth Trustee, Consultation Co-Convener

Judith Frediani - Director of Lifespan Faith Development

Sarah Eskrich – Local Youth Rep.

Tom Rylett – Canadian Youth Rep.

Beth Dana – UUA Youth Ministry Associate

Tera Little – UUA Lifespan RE Consultant for Pacific Southwest District, LREDA Rep.

Jesse Jaeger – UUA Youth Programs Director

Hannah Stampe – GLBPTTQQI Youth Rep.

Jova Vargas – YRUU Youth Rep.

Ian Moore – YRUU Youth Rep.

Julian Sharp – Youth Trustee on the UUA Board

Rev. Shana Lynngood – UUMA Rep.; Minister, All Souls Church in Washington DC

Rachel Davis (Not Present) – DRUUMM Youth Rep.

Homer Karvonides (Not Present) – DRUUMM Youth Rep.

Also In Attendance:

U.T. Saunders – Facilitator

Sean Jones – DRUUMM Youth & Young Adults Rep.

Rek Kwawer – UUA Youth Office Assistant, Notes

Zoe Engberg – Youth Office Intern, Video

District Gathering Facilitators (Attended Friday/Saturday):

Josephine Bibby – Youth Facilitator; Chrysalis Trainer

Jodi Slezak – Youth Facilitator; Chrysalis Trainer

Deborah Levering – Adult Facilitator; District Staff from Clara Barton

Tandi Rogers Koerger – Adult Facilitator; District Staff from Pacific Northwest

Phil Lund – Adult Facilitator; District Staff from Prairie Star

Samaya Oakley – Adult Facilitator; Youth Coordinator and Chrysalis Trainer

Pat Hoertdoerfer (Not Present) – Adult Facilitator; District Staff from NH/VT

Wednesday, July 26, 2006

→ Welcome and Introductions

Megan Dowdell welcomes everyone.

→ Chalice Lighting

→ Distribution of “Super Task Force Member!” certificates

→ U.T. Saunders (facilitator) welcomes everyone and reviews the objectives of this meeting.

- Surveys have been distributed, completed, and analyzed, and those findings will be presented. One goal of this meeting will be to review those findings, and consider their implications in our work going forward
- Some of the congregational conversations have been completed, and we have a summary of the data to date. We will look at the intersection of youth survey and congregational conversation data to both influence the work going forward.
- We do not have a concrete working definition of Youth Ministry, and may not have a definition at the end of the meeting, but we want to have a better shared understanding of the term by the end of this meeting, and to be able to communicate that to others.
- Related to youth ministry is the concept of Youth Empowerment, which has different meaning to different people, but we thought it would be good to spend time thinking and talking about that during this meeting.
- This task force is a group of youth and adults who work with youth. The youth met yesterday, and we will have the youth present on what came out of that meeting.
- This process requires buy-in and support, and willingness to carry this work forward by a number of stakeholders, and so we will spend some time thinking about what role and responsibility we would like the major stakeholders to have in advancing this work.
- This work is leading to a summit where key groups will be assembled to craft the next major steps in this effort. Not much thought has been given to who, or what the structure or process will be, and that is something we will start thinking about together.
- There is major work to be done at the district level, and much of this meeting will be spent working on that, starting on Thursday night, when we will be joined by other district team leaders who will be assigned to districts.

→ Exploring Empowerment

U.T. shares the Wheel of Life model, which the February 2005 Convocation explored in-depth. This model suggests that life is a wheel and over the course of living, we travel through several departments of life (which are always all active). We travel through the wheel in 28 year cycles at increasingly complex levels. At the core of the wheel is a vertical axis called Power, and a horizontal axis called Consciousness, and life is an ongoing interplay between those two. At one end of Consciousness is the development of self, and on the other end, others. On one end of Power is self-esteem, and the other end is the ability to respond/responsibility. In this model, power is a birthright. It is something that you always have, and it is just a question of whether you are using it effectively.

Activity: Form youth-adult pairs. Think about and share a situation when you felt empowered. Come back together as a large group to reflect on the features of that situation that made you feel empowered. Then think about and share a situation when you felt disempowered. Come back together as a large group again to share the features of what led to that feeling.

Features of Empowerment:

- One person or group of people who enable someone to be empowered, and those people or groups have status or power to give you that empowerment. "Others enable/authorize/empower someone"
- Empowering ourselves is not necessarily coming from someone else, but recognizing one's own skills and strengths, and when others do so.
- Having an opportunity to channel your empowerment "Opportunities to channel personal power."
- Encouragement and challenge to perform or deliver where one may not have thought possible.
- Being trusted or entrusted to do something
- Being affirmed about your ability to succeed, especially when you falter or fail.
- Often context-specific, but over time the experience of empowerment in those contexts leads to a personal sense of empowerment that transcends context.

Features of Disempowerment:

- Lack of respect and trust
- When called on disempowering someone, the persecutor painted themselves as the victim and the disempowered person as a persecutor.
- When you have contextual authority and others disregard that authority
- Positive coping or defense mechanisms often masquerade as empowerment, to cover the injury of disempowerment and allow the disempowering experiences to repeat.
- Sometimes the risk or cost of self-empowerment can lead to choosing not to act empowered
- When people make assumptions about an individual based on membership in a group, that is likely to be disempowering (when others assume inferiority owing to one's group membership)
- Being disempowered by an individual as their fear that your taking power will diminish theirs (power as a limited commodity, fear of losing it to others)
- One can be disempowered most effectively by those one respects and trusts.
- Structural power and personal power: how those interact effects one's sense of and response to disempowerment.
- Note: power and control are not synonymous.
- Is power an internal state?

U.T. shares another model about the victim-persecutor-rescuer triangle.

→ Youth Pre-Conference Reflections

The youth arrived a day and a half early and talked about what they thought was important for this meeting and this process. They started by checking in with thoughts about what is going on with youth and their roles.

Youth share the issues they identified:

- Not feeling connected to the process, not having time to check email and keep up with the process
- Accountability
- Energy of task force meetings – dynamics, language. Want more movement and variety. Youth committed to self-care, going to bed on time, in order to be present and energized at meetings.
- Ongoing struggle to balance being responsible and accountable about their Task Force work with the rest of their lives. Talked about ways to work on that tension.
- Suggest age caucuses for the task force meeting
- A desire to not isolate themselves and to build connections with everyone on the task force.

Youth share their vision for youth ministry:

- Not exclusive. Meets the needs of many youth – need for ministerial support, need to caucus as just youth, needs of youth in congregations. Proactive on every level.
- Mutual trust between youth and adults.
 - “Trust that I know what I'm doing, that I believe in what I'm saying or else I wouldn't say it, that we're responsible people, that we have the best of intentions, that we aren't exclusive (and are trying to work on that). If you expect me to respect you, I expect you to respect me back.”
- More spirituality – feel like it is often lost in the “politics” when youth get involved in leadership. Desire to get back to what the faith really is.
- Create more curricula about UU identity, history, and religion, rather than just about other religions. When doing this, it will be important to go beyond just the seven principles, because there is more to UUism than that.
- Curriculum that fits the needs of more congregations or youth groups doing youth development; curriculum is more subject-based.
- Trust youth to choose what curriculum they want or need.

Whole Group Discussion:

- Don't do everything for youth; being trusted with responsibility (without someone who will jump in and do everything for you) is empowering.
- Youth aren't as used to sitting in these all day meetings.
- Strategize about how to build the group cohesion:
 - Break into pairs
 - Work in small groups, then bring that work to the larger group
 - During breaks, find someone you haven't talked to much today and share about a favorite movie or other things about your life.
 - Break outside comfort zone to interact with youth and adults.
 - Moving around, energy breaks. Bonding games.
- Task Force needs to define expectations for task force member commitment – time and communication.

→ Survey Data:

Beth presents a Power Point presentation of the UU Youth Ministry Survey results.

- Distribution
- Collection (1,399 + 200-300 more after the deadline)

- Analysis

Section 1: Meeting the Spiritual Needs of Youth

Discussion about “how do youth know when their spiritual needs are being met?”

Suggestion – Focus group to figure out some of the different spiritual needs that youth have so that we can work on meeting them. Do case studies of youth who have found a spiritual home.

Question: Developmentally, how unusual is this? How does this compare to youth in other religions?

Divide into small groups around reflection question: How can our ministry with youth help them to determine their spiritual needs, articulate their faith, and feel spiritually fulfilled?

Reflections:

- Youth and young adults on the task force were not surprised at the finding of lack of spiritual fulfillment.
- The numbers for youth of color were also not surprising, and it was interesting to compare those to the GLBPTQQI numbers.
- It is interesting that a lot of youth feel at home in their congregation, but don't feel spiritually fulfilled.
- What is the connection between emotional fulfillment and spiritual fulfillment? Can there be spiritual fulfillment if there is not emotional fulfillment?

Section 2: Youth-Adult Relations and Intergenerational Community

Reflections:

- Need to make sure that support can come from many different areas (not just a youth group, or a youth group leader or advisor). This Task Force was charged with making sure we have many options for youth to fulfill their spiritual needs and thus there can be many ways for youth/adult relations to work.
- There are a lot of adults who say that they want to get engaged with youth but don't know how, and youth do the same thing, and so they end up missing each other, rather than connecting. Once there is a way to begin that relationship, they usually continue. Ways to facilitate that include not separating youth. Also important for different age groups to have their own space, and direction over their own programming and ministry.
- A lot of groups have had really good youth/adult relations coming from doing service work on the Gulf Coast; having shared work has been really good.
- There is a lack of support for adults doing work with youth, and youth work is seen as a specialty, rather than being integrated into the community.

Section 3: Priorities and Involvement

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

Section 4: Junior High Youth

Section 5: Welcoming All Youth

Comment: In our community and other religious communities, there are more women, and more women in leadership roles, although those may be particular leadership roles (i.e. there may be many women on a committee, but the chair may still be male, or there may be more women than men as UU ministers, but more male senior ministers). Note: this is a microcosm of a national issue/discussion.

Does there need to be discussion of involvement of both young men and young women and how to ensure that? We also need to be aware that there are youth who do not identify as male or female (transgender, genderqueer, intersex, or questioning).

Suggestions for survey presentation:

- Fewer slides about communication about events
- The final slide sounds more like a conclusion to the process, rather than input to the process. “These are some of the issues that the survey raised.” Change the language a little.
- More real voices of youth would make the report more organic. We have responses in the slide show from the two questions on the survey that were open ended.

→ Task Force Outreach and Workshops – Review of the Year

- Confusion in some communities
- Excitement from districts and district leaders, more so than congregations
- Interweave seems excited and dedicated to the process and to youth ministry
- Going and meeting people makes a big difference. How can we create the same energy and excitement among the people who we can't meet face to face?
- Jova and Ian went to the YRUU Steering Committee January meeting. At the beginning the SC seemed very unsure, but by the end seemed excited.
- What is exciting about this to YRUU? The ability to make changes to YRUU. But there is also anxiety that this will drastically change continental YRUU because the Consultation is so focused on congregations.
 - Is the concern from YRUU that there won't be enough resources go around, and that if congregational programs are strengthened, then there won't be support for continental programs?
- Some ministers really want to engage with the process, and those are the congregations that have really committed to and done congregational conversations, because of ministerial support. Others not as supportive. Ministers are important contributors to the process and to implementation.
- Based on GA workshops: it seems like we are already engaging the people who are likely to be supportive (parents, DREs, advisors), and we need to figure out ways to engage the people in other roles at the congregations. It's about congregational growth and spiritual depth.
- Desire to make sure that this process stays in sync with other UUA processes.
- Canada is currently restructuring youth governance. Tom and Beth attending the Winds of Change Conference in Winnipeg over Labor Day weekend. There's a lot of support for changing youth governance and participating in the Consultation.

→ Congregational Conversations

Megan Dowdell shares a summary/analysis of the first 35 congregational conversations, which are likely to be representative of the overall results.

The process of the conversations:

Diagnosis
Vision
Needs Assessment
Next Steps

Themes from these conversations:

- Serving the spiritual needs of youth
- Intergenerational community relations
- Leadership development and opportunities for leadership practice
- Mission, vision, and living our principles through youth ministry
- Resources, curriculum, and transitional age youth

11 congregations offered feedback in addition to the standard report forms.

Positive feedback:

- Worthwhile
- Allowed them to take action to make changes
- They plan to continue the discussion

Changes or suggestions:

- Lack of time to complete the strategies/resource section
- Difficult to schedule and motivate people

Evaluation of the force field analysis as a tool:

- Confusing to some, but generally it worked well
- Allows people to focus on the process and make it their own.

302 have signed up, and more than 60 have turned in their forms so far. Getting that many to sign up is a big achievement. It is hopeful that we'll get to 100, which would be very successful. It would be great to have congregations do these even beyond the deadline, because it allows them to implement congregational change.

Job Jot for Beth: Edit the current congregational process guide so that it's a more accessible and general tool for evaluating congregational youth ministry.

→ What are the implications of these findings (survey and congregational conversations) for our work going forward?

Might need to reexamine our objectives and add something related to spiritual needs of youth. Feedback about the desired outcomes often relates to them lacking a theological center. We need to develop definition on youth ministry but ALSO add it to objectives for this process.

Job Jot for Beth: In future materials, add a desired outcome about meeting the spiritual needs of youth and fostering spiritual depth in our youth ministry.

→ Reflections on Information Gathered

Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression:

One issue raised in the survey but not mentioned often in the congregational conversations is anti-oppression/anti-racism work. It's not being talked about in report forms. Perhaps there's a connection between this and what youth of color are saying in the survey about how much it's a part of our congregations and how comfortable youth of color feel in congregations. So how much can we infer about what's not coming up in congregational conversations?

Success of welcoming congregation program and different experience of GLBPTQQI youth contrasted with lack of AR/AO and experience of youth of color. Perhaps youth community could play leadership role in engaging congregations in AR/AO work through this self-administered new AR/AO program for congregations.

Transracially Adopted Youth:

Rated their youth ministry experience consistently and significantly lower than all other youth.

Conversation about transracial adoption is a very important one, but perhaps not for the task force to take on. Points out a ministry that congregations should be providing to families.

Family:

Wonder whether there's any correlation between how connected youth feel with their family and how connected youth feel with the church. If they have good relationship with parents/family who are active in the church, does it make them more connected in the church? There's research that youth ages 14-16 disconnect from family and plug into another community - sometimes that's the congregation.

Youth that joined youth groups without their parents - would be an interesting group to talk to. Youth join without family support behind them, sometimes even have to hide it from parents.

Are we missing support networks for people at very predictable times in their life journey?

Depth and Variety:

Youth ministry isn't broad enough (inclusive) and not deep enough (spiritually and meaningfully).

There ought to be many more options/"containers" at the district level than the current YRUU structure.

Young Adults:

There's an age where you're old enough (older high school age) that it feels like programs are geared toward younger youth. Getting young adults more involved is really important.

Congregation Size:

Difference between congregation sizes is immense. Some have more going on; some youth ministries are more connected with minister and the congregation.

Wish we'd asked congregation size in the survey - but how could we have done that? We are dividing congregational conversations that way.

→ Youth Ministry/Youth Empowerment Handouts

Read the handouts overnight to prepare for working groups tomorrow morning.

Youth Ministry handout - combination of ideas from Beth, Jesse, district workshops, youth/ministers/religious educators/seminarians

Youth Empowerment handout - condensed research on empowerment by Margot Breton and U.T.'s research on power in an organizational context

→ Process Check

How well did we do in the following areas?

Initiating: Avg. 4.75 out of 7

Information or Opinion Seeking: Avg. 5.45 out of 7

Information or Opinion Giving: Avg. 5.27 out of 7

Clarifying and Elaborating: Avg. 5.45 out of 7

Summarizing: Avg. 3.9 out of 7

- Didn't do as well at coming forth and sharing ideas, but did well at seeking/asking questions.
- Lots of adults sharing at times.
- We're slow at things. Moving quicker/fast paced would help some of us focus more. Don't want us to go in circles.
- When the group is given space, we'll take it. Would be helpful to have facilitator reign us in sometimes. Push is along more.

Reflection: Where did we each contribute the most?

Thursday, July 27, 2006

→ Defining Youth Ministry and Youth Empowerment

Divide into four small groups (2 Youth Ministry and 2 Youth Empowerment) for discussion, using the handouts as a jumping off point.

Youth Ministry Group 1: Tom, Hannah, Julian

Youth Ministry Group 2: Jova, Bill, Judith, Beth

Youth Ministry Definition Working Group: Sean, Hannah, Beth and Shana

YOUTH MINISTRY WORKING DEFINITION

Unitarian Universalist youth ministry is youth and adults collaborating to create authentic, anti-racist, anti-oppressive and multicultural communities which empower and support:

- The spiritual and religious development of youth
- Mutual love, respect, and trust between and among youth and adults
- A youth-driven ministry of justice that transforms the lives and communities of us all.

“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

Feedback to incorporate into the above definition:

-add footnote about language of anti-racism and anti-oppression, about why we use it instead of stuff people might feel more comfortable with

-doesn't want anti- language, would like something more positive, but things like “beloved community” are not very clear or direct

-in some communities it needs to be as strong as anti- because they are literally waging war

-in order to not be part of a racist/oppressive dynamic, you have to actively go against it, anti- heightens consciousness of the prevalence of the phenomenon

-where is the place of ministering with each other – “among” is in there, but we might want to make it more explicit

Youth Empowerment Group 1: Jesse, Shana, Ian

Youth Empowerment Group 2: Tera, Sara, Megan

Youth Empowerment Definition Working Group: Tom, Tera, Megan, Jova

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT WORKING DEFINITION

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 making a decision, including resources and programming.
- Talking direct, open and honest in that relationship.
- Mentoring relationships.
- Solidarity amongst youth to enhance power.

- Recognizing youth ministry history as a part of our collective history.

Thoughts:

-“solidarity amongst youth to enhance power” – coming together to strengthen confidence, not necessarily in opposition to the rest of the community but to have each other’s backs, a more robust expression of themselves

-Come together to build collective voice so they can speak up

The Youth Office will incorporate these suggestions and send them back out to the Task Force. These working definitions will then be brought to district gatherings to get feedback beyond the Task Force.

→ Stakeholders

The Task Force is working with a group of key stakeholders whose involvement is essential to helping advance this work.

Break into five groups and use survey/congregational conversation data to apply reflections about what is needed to the role of each stakeholder and contributions they can make. There is some hesitancy to “tell stakeholders what to do.” Whether or not the Task Force asks for specific things from stakeholders, we still need to articulate our hopes.

Note: Some of the groups identified as “core stakeholders” earlier in the process are not addressed in small groups here. They *will*, however, still be integrally involved.

UU Ministers Association:

Goals for involvement:

- Executive Committee can encourage UUMA chapters to be involved.
- Visioning for ministerial role in youth ministry.
- Encourage ministers to minister with the entire congregation, including youth.
- Address the need ministers have in order to effectively minister with their youth constituency. In all stages/steps of ministry: seminary, ministerial fellowship, and continuing education. UUMA can advocate for this and for ordained youth ministers.
- Youth should feel that they can go to ministers.
- “Are there ways to improve your capacity and competence at serving and ministering with youth?”

Concrete steps:

- Figure out who is on the Executive Committee (elected at GA). Bring them up to speed on the Consultation. Write a letter to them inviting them into conversation and into working with us.
- Send them the working definitions of youth empowerment and youth ministry, so that they can respond and offer feedback.
- Share survey results.
- Reconnect with UUMA chapter contacts that we gathered earlier this year.

Liberal Religious Educators Association:

As an organization:

- Participate in the stakeholder conversation at the 2006 LREDA Fall Conference
- Youth or youth advisor on the LREDA Board
- Try to make the LREDA Fall Conference relevant and accessible to youth, perhaps including youth presenters

Both the organization and the religious educators:

- Religious educators are key implementers of the Summit recommendations
- Be open to a new model of youth ministry, since they will be a major part of taking this to the next steps in congregations
- Advocates for youth
- Let youth know about district/continental programming and opportunities
- Religious educators and youth advisors form covenanted relationships
- LREDA and religious educators can advocate for youth advisor stipends and professional youth ministries

Religious educators:

- Promote district gatherings on youth ministry
- Inform congregations, ministers, lay people and youth about youth ministry models, opportunities, and recommendations

Group thoughts:

- Sense a fear among some religious educators of working with youth – adults need to be allies to each other
- Suggestion for Ministry With Youth Renaissance Module – fishbowl of DREs/Youth Advisors because of tension that sometimes exists between these roles

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists:

Vision of YRUU:

- A place where youth can connect beyond their congregations, also for youth who feel out of place in their congregations
- Bridging the gap between local and continental levels, more available to congregations and linking congregations to the larger picture
- Connect youth with other (mainly adult-focused) UU groups and organizations, especially thinking about identity- or justice- related organizations (though also others like LREDA). YRUU could help that process by helping other organizations get excited about youth involvement.
- Improve internal and external communication, like communication between Youth Council Reps and YRUU Steering Committee
- Empowered relationships between youth and adults where youth and adults can reveal their weaknesses without being exploited

Participation in the Consultation process:

- Spread information to youth *through* youth (network at Youth Council and give them resources to bring information to their districts)
- Communication between Steering Committee and Task Force reps to help them understand their role in the process, including inviting youth to the Summit.
- Ensure youth involvement in district gatherings
- Want YRUU to be deeply involved in this process. YRUU leadership should wrestle with the data from the survey like all the other stakeholders are doing, especially the fact that half of youth say they don't find their spiritual home in congregations/youth ministry. See what implications the data has for YRUU culture.

Things for YRUU to think about:

- "How can YRUU programs bring youth more deeply into their faith, rather than leading them in the opposite direction, to make it unique and special to this community?"
- Spiritual content of YRUU

UUA and District Staff:

Who:

- UUA District Staff (Conversation at Big Complex Meeting in November)
- UUA staff groups (Conversations during September – February): Congregational Services, Advocacy and Witness, Identity-Based Ministries, Stewardship and Development, Communications, Lifespan Faith Development, Ministry and Professional Leadership

Issues Brainstorm:

- Make the connection that youth ministry is part of all our work-- integrated into the wholeness rather than an afterthought
 - Youth involved where possible in all parts of the process of fundraising, ministry, leadership, advocacy, faith development, etc.
- Permanent funding/resources for youth ministry
- Strong youth ministry is directly related to the growth of our movement
- Respect for youth as people and respect for the idea of youth ministry
- Support for families does not equal supporting youth, need to support families as well as youth
- We're still learning, there are no definite answers (every situation is different)
- Congregations partner around youth ministry
- Youth on every district board, and support structures for them
- Engagement in theological discussion about youth ministry
- Youth ministry isn't just about solving problems, which is when many adults now step in or start paying attention

Process:

- Separate conversation with each UUA staff group, followed by integrating the ideas
- Because UUA staff groups are so involved with other stakeholders, the conversations with staff may resemble conversations with the stakeholders
- Suggestion from district staff: Wrestle with the data at regional staff gatherings, gain a deep understanding of it. Could invite Task Force members to these gatherings.

- Try to get 2 hours at the Big Complex Meeting of district staff

Diverse and Revolutionary UU Multicultural Ministries:

- Identify adults of color that would be willing and able to support youth of color at YRUU and other youth events
- More outreach to youth of color
- Recognize and try to respond to the unique experiences of youth of color in typical UU settings; also help cultivate an understanding of these unique needs across the movement
- Recognition that DRUUMM is already providing a community for youth of color
- Participate in the creation of a resource that white ministers, professionals, youth advisors, etc. can draw on to help support/fulfill the needs of youth of color. Work with Allies for Racial Equity and Identity-Based Ministries on this project.
- Recognition that DRUUMM will not be able to do much of this without receiving adequate and sustained funding and support.

These are preliminary thoughts about the unique contributions DRUUMM might make to the advancement of youth ministry.

There is not an expectation that DRUUMM can or will meet the needs of every person of color in our faith, because that's not feasible, but the above ideas could move it towards the mission.

→ Summit on Ministry To and With Youth

July 23-27, 2007

Purpose:

As articulated in the process design –

To make recommendations to the UUA Board of Trustees (and to key stakeholder groups, districts, and congregations) about strengthening UU youth ministry.

Time to strategize about ways to implement these things. We're not going to invite the summit attendees to re-do the work of the task force; rather, we will invite them to begin implementing. Implementation will also be continued after the summit.

A working conference informed by the work of the task force. Include carefully selected leaders from key constituencies who we think will be able to motivate their constituencies to carry out the work that the Summit recommends.

Summit attendees will receive information *before* the summit about the survey, congregational conversations, district gatherings, and stakeholder conversations.

Structure:

U.T. explains “search conferences” (at least a day and a half). This model allows participants to “own” the final project:

- History of whatever is being studied that the participants themselves construct
 - Youth ministry at large
 - UUA’s youth ministry
 - What politically/worldwide is influencing youth ministry
- The present

- Current state of UUA's youth ministry
- Presentation of task force data – a combination of all the different realities of stakeholders
- Analysis of data
- The future
 - Ideal and patch to the ideal
- Homogenous groups/caucuses
 - How can you implement this in your realm?
- Designate leadership for next steps – implementation task force.

Create an action plan for the Board, recommendations for stakeholders/congregations/districts. Work with specific areas to implement the plan.

Another suggestion: Task Force, or subsets of it, comes up with a set of recommendations or possibilities that the summit could examine and decide upon.

Concern about going over the history again:

Clarification: U.T. is talking about an activity that will energize and bring people together. Having people know the history creates stronger work; this didn't begin with this Task Force. This is more about energy and process than about content.

Who:

Maximum number of attendees to make the gathering financially viable: 50 people (including the 15 Task Force members)

Roles we want present:

- Presidents of Meadville Lombard and Starr King School of Ministry
- President of UUA
- UUA Moderator
- President of UUMA
- President of LREDA
- Steering Committee members (all) - 9 total
- President of DRUUMM
- Chair of DRUUMM YaYA
- President of Interweave
- President of District Presidents Association
- Youth in key leadership positions who will help affect change
- CUC Director of Lifespan Learning
- President of CUC
- Youth Advisors
- Religious Educators
- Ministers
- Local Youth
- District youth leaders
- Other Task Force members

We want to invite the roles and personalities who are strongly committed, and who have the power to advance this work.

Invitations:

Step 1: A 1.5 page letter describing what the summit is, why it is important, and why they are important. From the co-conveners.

Step 2: Follow up phone call to each invitee.

Summit Planning Committee:

-Bill

-Sara

-Jesse (convener)

-Beth (convener)

-Julian

-Rachel (alternate 1 is Sean Jones, alternate 2 is Jova)

-Megan

The Summit Planning Committee will convene a conference call in mid-September to finalize the invite list and begin asking people to attend.

Friday, July 28, 2007

→ Worship

→ Welcome and Introductions

Non-task force district gathering facilitators join us.

→ Review of background of Consultation

→ Review of information, resources, materials

One of these resources is the step by step guide for district gathering facilitators – responsibilities before, during, and after the gatherings.

→ Contacting Districts and Assessing the Environment

Exercise 1:

About communication and interpreting messages.

Lessons of this exercise:

- There are three essential elements in an interpersonal transaction: the ‘Message Sender’ the ‘Message Receiver’ and the ‘Message’
- The Message Sender has (intentions); the Message Receiver is in some way (affected) by the message.
- Meaning is not in the message however, it is in the message sender and the message receiver.
- The Sender’s intentions may diverge from the effect on the Receiver
- Need to test for alignment between intentions and effects, familiarity with the others’ code book helps with that alignment
- If you didn’t get intended effect, do something different
- Share and elicit context
- When applying these concepts to our work with the districts our goal is to make common/shared meaning. We’re there to learn anything and everything we can that is relevant to the district’s youth ministry.

Keep all of this in mind (in telephone interviews) with district leaders.

Teams need to support each other. Youth facilitator talking to adult district staff may get misinterpreted. Adult facilitator can be an ally. Can also happen with youth district leader talking to adult facilitator.

We’re asking people to think more deeply into experiences (in their district’s youth ministry) that they haven’t thought about so much.

JOB JOT: Beth will send facilitators the conference call training handout from YACM.

Jesse points out that it may be easier to talk to key people individually. People sometimes say things differently in a group than they do individually – they may be more open in one-on-one conversations. Youth and adult facilitators can split up individual calls to district leaders.

Exercise 2:

Mock conference calls. A is facilitator. B is district voice. C is observer. Observer should pay attention to the facilitator – how much did they seek information, clarify information, etc. Ask some of the questions on the “Gathering Background...” handout.

Lessons of this exercise:

- Tone of voice helps in feeling welcome and served
- Start out saying “I don’t know much about your district structure.” Show that you want to know about it.
- Listen well. Facilitator/interviewer shouldn’t talk too much.
- Make questions your own.
- Start by saying why you’re having the conversation.
- Patience
- Start out saying you’re taking notes.
- Get positive and critical people there so we can share what’s working well and solve problems.
- Affirming way of asking questions
- Positive energy
- Make sure they have your contact info at the end
- Take copious notes so you remember exactly what was said, feel free to ask people to wait a moment so you can capture what they said
- Facilitator/interviewer test what the person said, reflect ideas back – “Let me just see if I got that. Are you saying... or Do you mean...”
- Use this as an opportunity to heighten your sensitivity to verbal exchange – listen to tone of voice, trailing off, animation, etc. (signs of meaning-making)
- Make sure the person has time to talk to you when you call – if not, then when would be a good time, and can also set up a separate call
- We’ll learn things we didn’t know were important so we can ask follow-up questions
- Different when you don’t know the person ahead of time and are trying to get to know them over the phone

Talk to as many different people as possible in the district because everyone has their own perspective.

Important things to think about going forward:

- Be aware that regions of each district might have different relevant issues and opinions. Many are very diverse within their geographic area.
- Easier for extroverts to get in-depth quickly. Think about how to draw out introverts.
- Try not to be overbearing. Be affirming of people’s interviewing and answering skills.
- Ask for what you need. Slow down, moment to catch up, talk a little more slowly, etc.

- Remember you come into this with your own codebook about how districts work. Recognize your assumptions.

→ Logistics

Travel: Call travel agent Ron Rajewski to book travel 2 months ahead of time (or earlier). District folks should arrange for your travel to/from airport and to/from site.

Reimbursement: Call Rek to get reimbursed.

Housing: Arrange housing early with the district – hotel or home hospitality. District pays for your expenses while you're at the site. UUA pays for all travel expenses. Youth and adult shouldn't stay in the same room (safe congregations policy).

Be clear with the districts what you need – housing, food, transportation, etc.

Make sure that youth and adult gathering attendees are signing code of ethics forms – district staff can talk about this, talk to Jesse if there's push-back.

→ District Gathering Format

Format will vary from district to district – see page 10 in Process Guide.

- District annual meetings
- Youth conferences
- Stand alone event

→ Confirm Facilitator Pairs and District Assignments

Beth facilitates this process. Beth will check with facilitators who couldn't attend the meeting to make sure their assignments work.

→ Review Survey Results District Case Study

Beth goes through one district case study, and facilitators offer feedback about content, analysis, and presentation. Small groups each take a section of the presentation and determine what the most important points are in that section and what the best way is to present them.

We also discussed the best ways for youth and adults to co-present and facilitate this piece of the gathering.

Jesse's reflections on youth and adult co-facilitation: Need to have a conversation before about how you're going to work together with the slides. Adults will get really into it. Even if youth speak, adult participants will probably direct things/questions to the adults. Make sure you both spend a lot of time going over the slides so you understand them. Staff have spent much more time with slides – creates power inequity.

Tom's reflections about youth and adult co-facilitation: Go through slides together ahead of time. Know the slides well enough to be looking at/talking to the participants, not just looking at slides.

→ Facilitating the Process

This **exercise** provides an opportunity for a few facilitators to practice leading the brainstorming and strategy sections of the district gatherings. Four people facilitate (they have about 15 minutes to prepare), and the rest are assigned “roles” or “personalities” in the discussion. The facilitators have to learn to handle these personalities effectively.

Facilitators: Julian, Deborah, Jodi, Shana

Participant roles:

Parent

District Executive

Youth Advisor and former LRYer

Youth who doesn't think YRUU needs to change at all

Boundary-oriented DRE

Supporting and empowering advisor

YAC chair

Burnt out YCR

Locally based youth

Self congratulatory youth

District Program Consultant

Wonderful minister

Facilitator Reflections:

- Better prepared you are, easier it is to go with what comes at you
- Task needs to be clearly stated so that groups stay on track
- If someone is being inappropriate, facilitators should take them aside
- “I know you think everything’s working fine and I don’t doubt your perception is accurate to you. But let’s find ways to make fine even better.”
- Suggestion: district send out resource to adults before the gathering – how to participate in empowering discussion with youth.
- “I’m glad you had a good experience back then. What are some things you liked about it.” – grab onto positive energy and dig deeper
- Summarize what people have said and ask how they believe that will benefit what we’re doing. “I hear you’re sharing what was valuable for you when you were young. How would you like that to be used for our thoughts about how we go forward.”
- Acknowledge what you’ve heard someone say. Not just “OK.” Instead “I hear you, you’ve said...and I want to learn from you for what we’re doing right now. So we can learn from it about how to improve things now.”
- Don’t be nice. Be good. (U.T.’s wisdom) If something’s not great, don’t act like it’s great.
- Don’t ask difficult people to leave, because it has effect on the whole group.
- District leaders are allies to facilitators – they can help you with difficult people, because they might even know them better. Facilitators should ask for help.
- Test the room to see if they’re thinking the same as the difficult person. If not, say “Seems like the room is feeling this way...let’s move in this direction.”
- Prayer before gathering – “It’s not about me. It’s about all those youth who desperately need UUism.”

Saturday, July 29, 2006

→ Reflections on the Task Force Meeting and the overall process

- Meeting has been efficient, no drama
- This process has come a long way
- Appreciation for facilitators, it's a big job
- In next couple months adult facilitators will reach out to their youth facilitators to have deep conversation about what we need from each other
- Really happy about connections we've made within this meeting, connection between youth and adults
- The more we can talk about how we engage each other in the process, how we discuss and problem-solve, how we check-in with each other – learn to be forgiving
- Sense of loss at not having some of the facilitators here

U.T.'s reflections on change:

You can't really understand a system until you try to change it. Changing a system takes time. They often don't change because the attention span of the people in the culture is too short. We often don't have the capacity to steer things over long periods of time toward an outcome. Takes a sustained commitment and shoulder to the wheel over time to change systems. Helps to have committee with paid staff support. Committee needs to meet periodically with planning work in between. Change the course as we've learned, but kept our nose to the change.

Break up the status quo. Unfreeze norms and behaviors. Create more consciousness about something. Things start to be up in the air, and they often settle someplace differently.

Often groups who are anxious about a change end up sabotaging the change. They want it to come sooner. There's a lot you have to put out before you reach a threshold where you begin to get returns. Just have to keep slugging, and you'll finally realize what you did it for.

→ More District Gathering Logistics

Preparation: Arrive a day early if possible – talk with co-facilitator, check the site and make sure you have everything you need

Materials: District should provide projector, computer, other technology – if they can't then talk to the Youth Office

→ After the Gathering

Facilitators will be the group responsible for getting feedback to the task force.

Part 1: Facilitator Afterthoughts

- Answer questions provided on the "Facilitator Afterthoughts" handout.
- Send to the Youth Office within a week after the gathering.

JOB JOT FOR BETH: Create a separate listserv for facilitators to exchange feedback after the gatherings. Look into possibility of a website that provides the questions and facilitators can just type in their response.

Part 2: Report Forms (4 forms)

- District Information – fill out with coordinators of the district gathering
- Strengths and Challenges – can type this out, don't necessarily have to use the form
- Identifying Needs and Changes

Part 3: Participant Evaluations

- Gather and mail into Youth Office
- Let participants know that this feedback is really important to you – don't just want "OK"
- Helps us evaluate the process
- Do it at the meeting so we can get the most participation in the evaluation
- Also offer Youth Office's e-mail so people can send further thoughts afterwards

JOB JOT FOR BETH: Edit the evaluation/process guide to include an option for middle school age participants.

Part 4: Conference Call with the District Task Force

- Core group identified by the district before the meeting, with space for a couple important/interested people to join at the gathering
- Organize a follow-up conference call with the district task force and leadership about one month after the gathering. Schedule this call while you're all at the gathering in person.
- Good time to talk about what their plans are for next steps in the process.

→ District Facilitator Time Commitment

- District Info
- Type things into report forms
 - What if multiple groups doing each of the four key areas? How to consolidate?
 - All three groups report on top three – there will be overlap
 - Then ask the whole group to focus on their overall top three
- Send all participant evaluations
- Type up feedback on youth ministry/youth empowerment working definitions

Time commitment: 4-6 hours per gathering – talk in pairs about how you'll split this up
Ask if one person in each team has a laptop – if not let the Youth Office know. It may work to start typing things up at the gathering.

→ Next Steps

- District Gatherings
- Personal stuff so you can take care of yourself
- Think about young adults who are starting new schools and having to explain what they're doing – talk with Youth Office about getting letters excusing them from school
- Engaging stakeholders
- Summit Task Force planning, details and outreach
- Summit

Summary of Job Jots

Summit Planning Team:

- Jesse and Beth (conveners) organize a conference call for mid-September to finalize the invite list and begin reaching out to those people.
- Beth will research potential sites for the Summit and gather price quotes.

All Stakeholder Teams:

Shana/Julian (UUMA), Jova/Ian (YRUU), Tera/Megan/Beth (District Staff), Judith/Tera/Sara (LREDA), Rachel/Homer/Jesse/Sean (DRUUMM), Hannah/Shana (Interweave), Megan/Jesse (Youth Advisors), Beth/Jesse/Tom (CUC)

- Reach out the leadership of your assigned stakeholder organization to secure their commitment and strategize about how to involve their membership/leadership in a conversation about youth ministry.

All District Gathering Facilitators:

- Get to know your co-facilitators.
- Contact district leaders to assess the environment and gather information.

Beth/Youth Office:

- Edit the current congregational process guide so it's a more accessible and general tool for evaluating congregational youth ministry.
- Add desired outcome about meeting the spiritual needs of youth and fostering spiritual depth in our youth ministry. Edit desired outcomes to include relationships between and *among* youth and adults.
- Incorporate Task Force suggestions for Youth Ministry/Youth Empowerment definitions and send back to the Task Force.
- Send district gathering facilitators the conference call training info from YACM.
- Create a separate listserv for facilitators to exchange feedback after the gatherings.
- Look into possibility of website where you can enter responses to facilitator afterthoughts questions.
- Edit the participant evaluation/process guide to include an option for middle school age participants.
- Send letters to youth/young adults on Task Force excusing them from school for district gatherings.