

UUA Board of Trustees Consultation on Youth Ministry

January 19, 2007

Participants: UUA Board of Trustees

Facilitators: Jesse Jaeger

Overview of the Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth

Jesse reviewed the Consultation process and where this conversation fits in. The Board then split into their working groups.

Ideal Youth Ministry

Jesse shared the “ideal youth ministry” statement used in congregational conversations as a starting point. Each working group added to the statement using the lens of their working group.

Original:

The ideal Unitarian Universalist youth ministry will:

- no longer be seen as a problem, but rather as an asset to our congregations and our movement as a whole.
- recreate one faith, where youth can both self-differentiate and integrate with the rest of the denomination.
- have many different, equally recognized, and supported forms—youth-adult, youth-youth, and both lay and professional ministry.
- have more financial, training, and professional support resources.
- be seen not just as a program but as a ministry, allowing for youth to explore and better understand and articulate their faith and spirituality.
- make sure that all UU youth feel supported and welcomed in their congregations and in the denomination, and feel like they have a voice.
- help the voice and energy of youth to drive congregations, especially around progressive and sustainable social change.
- make sure that anti-racism and anti-oppression work is a central part of all UU communities, leading us to examine how racism and oppression tear us apart, both individually and as a faith.
- create genuine youth-adult partnerships grounded in mutual respect, trust, understanding, and empowerment.
- fundamentally transform our congregations with its greater commitment to nurturing and supporting youth during this formative time and to helping youth remain UU as they grow in their faith.

Additions:

- Multiple working groups changed the word “denomination” to “Association”
- The congregations working group asked “what about other social changes?” in response to “help the voice and energy of youth to drive congregations, especially around progressive and sustainable social change”
- Camps and conferences, integration
- Involve in committees

- Process to continually develop new youth leaders, ready to move
- Youth part of governing bodies – of congregations, districts, everything
- Put in Ends policy (for UUA, policy governance districts)
- Exec-limitations to stipulate “all-ages lens”
- People of all ages want to be involved. If we include children and youth in policies definition “people.” (What ends, what cost, for what people?)
- View youth ministry as integral in the life of the congregation and youth will view themselves as integral to the life of the congregation
- Nurture youth subculture and welcome all youth

Driving and Restraining Forces

Questions to spark discussion in working groups:

1. What is happening currently, from the perspective of your working group, to move us toward the ideal?
2. What is holding us back from achieving this ideal? What are some of the challenges?

Association Working Group
Living Our Faith

Driving Forces	Restraining Forces
<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coming of Age programs ○ Youth participation in worship – intergenerational worship ○ Youth Trustee ○ Youth AR/AO commitment ○ MRE requirement RE/youth competency <p>Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flexible membership rules to support youth members ○ Youth Office ○ YRUU leadership, Steering Committee ○ Youth Program at GA ○ Youth Advisor Training ○ New lifespan curriculum ○ Youth Caucus ○ YRUU Social Justice Training ○ UUSC work camps ○ Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth ○ Campus ministry 	<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cost of youth to participate (membership) ○ Lack of dedicated, trained, professional advisors ○ Inadequate understanding of youth interests and passion to engage youth with worship, social justice, etc. ○ Lack of deep understanding of how to nurture, protect, empower in healthy ways as adults, congregations ○ Upstairs, downstairs, out of site <p>Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adult avoidance of youth ○ Lack of authentic respect and engagement ○ Lack of accountability with youth ○ Lack of accountability of youth ○ Mythology about youth and youth culture ○ Projection ○ Lack of youth of color

Congregational Working Group
Living Our Faith

Driving Forces	Restraining Forces
<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ OWL, COA, Neighboring Faiths ○ Yearning to do better – a sense for more and better ○ Excellent leadership (adult), far too few ○ Youth Director retained in budget in spite of cuts <p>Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth Cons? ○ Some district staff more committed to youth work than others ○ Social justice opportunities ○ Work camps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low expectations of youth – lack of certainty ○ Pandering to youth i.e. laissez-faire attitude to youth ○ Unwillingness of congregation to partner, to create a critical mass of youth. ○ Lack of urgency “We are dying” – Harlan ○ Few adult role models ○ Theological blandness ○ Lack of commitment from and by ministers ○ Narcissistic adults

Growth Working Group
Living Our Faith

Driving Forces	Restraining Forces
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Professional staff at congregational and district levels ○ Youth-adult partnership in congregations ○ Trainings - Advisors, Coming of Age ○ Service Projects (social justice) ○ Youth-led congregational worship ○ Invitation to youth from smaller congregations until they achieve a critical mass ○ District Cons ○ Adult volunteers-cohesive and well-trained ○ Space (dedicated) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of space ○ Lack of money – critical mass of youth ○ Infrequent use of youth in worship ○ Transitory nature of youth (X) ○ Competing demands (X) ○ Burning out of adult volunteers ○ Lack of ministerial involvement (O) ○ Adult abandonment, not youth empowerment ○ Lack of programming ○ Bridge to nowhere (O) ○ Lack of communication about campus ministry- of and for the walking wounded <p style="text-align: right;">0 more difficult X very difficult</p>

Justice Working Group
Living Our Faith

Driving Forces	Restraining Forces
<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coming of Age programs, confirmation process 	<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Failure to engage in common worship, exclusion from adult worship, worship

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Worship participation/leadership in common consistent liturgies ○ Process/programs that promote integration, relationships, affirmation <p>Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ District participation dependent upon congregation membership ○ District youth coordinators ○ Inclusion in adult programming 	<p>that doesn't engage youth people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Façade of authority and autonomy ○ Teaching kids that they are the victims of adults <p>Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Come-outer identity in adult cultures ○ Teaching our kids that they are the center of the world (individualism to the nines) ○ Encouraging contrariness (left to the fringes)
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Governance Working Group
Living Our Faith

Driving Forces

Restraining Forces

<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New governance models and Open Space Technology to encourage this conversation – getting the bigger picture ○ Having youth on UUA Board and congregational Boards – youth on committees, intergenerational ○ Chrysalis training of advisors and youth leaders <p>Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High level of social justice activities at congregations ○ Excellent religious educators ○ Increasing emphasis on Supporting DRE ○ District talk about Campus Ministry ○ District Director of Youth and Young Adults ○ District coordination of campus ministry ○ Strong Safe Congregational Program ○ AR/AO/MC work to give models ○ Camps and Conference Centers ○ Youth at GA, especially getting on stage to speak candidly about what's wrong ○ Born-UU young adult leaders insisting 	<p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low numbers of committees who include youth (at congregation, district, UUA levels) ○ Lack of <i>funding</i> for youth ministry programs – inequitable funding for staff who work with youth vs. staff who work with adults ○ Prejudice and stereotypes about youth by adults and about adults by youth <p>Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tendency of youth to be asleep on Sundays and youth and adults to work on different clocks ○ Logistical issues (not matching) ○ Larger cultural segregation of children, youth and adults ○ Who has time to serve in leadership ○ Societal discounting of women and children – those who work with them ○ You don't hear people NOT at the table (youth and families left out because they are not here)
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Young Adult/Youth Interns at Washington Office○ Youth Caucus Process	
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Working Groups Share Ideas