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THE REPORT AND FINDINGS
OF THE
**1997 youth programs
review committee**
TO THE UUA BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND
AND
THE YOUTH COUNCIL OF YRUU
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UUA Steering Committee
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service <http://uua.org/YRUU>

1997 Youth Programs Review Committee

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Introduction

The Committee

The Youth Programs Review Committee (YPRC) was created in the fall of 1995 by the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA Board) at the request of the Youth Council of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) and charged to:

1. Determine the current progress of YRUU at the continental, district and local levels and give recommendations for changes that would better meet the needs and purposes of Unitarian Universalist youth
2. Evaluate and report on all aspects of continental youth programming, services, resources, Religious Education curricula, training (especially for advisors), and publications including Synapse, The Spider and The Youth Advisory
3. Evaluate annual events such as Con-Con and Youth Council
4. Deliver a report by June of 1997

In its composition of members, the YPRC consisted of a high school-aged youth, a college-aged former YRUUer, a young adult former YRUU Programs Specialist, a local youth group advisor, a Director of Religious Education, a minister, a UUA Board member and a UUA staff liaison. Among these individuals is also represented a broad range of UU youth program experience including a current Youth Council and Steering Committee member, several former Youth Council members and a former Steering Committee member, four former Continental Conference staff members, three continental leadership and advisor trainers, a trained AYS leader, several current and former district level youth governing committee members and a former member of Liberal Religious Youth (LRY).

Our committee met four times over 17 months, including at the 1996 UUA General Assembly in Indianapolis where a Youth Focus, attended by 350 youth, featured programming and events highlighting the philosophy of the UU youth movement. In addition to utilizing this opportunity to circulate questionnaires, hold hearings and conduct interviews, we also sought information through a variety of other means. The committee conducted group interviews with key UUA staff members, including Makaanah Morriss, Director of the Religious Education Department; Jory Agate, Youth Programs Director; Meg Riley, former Youth Programs Director; and Kathy Daneman and David Taylor, the YRUU Programs Specialists serving at that time. Individual committee members interviewed youth and adults involved in youth programming at all levels, with particular efforts made to speak with former YRUU Programs Specialists. We distributed surveys to District Presidents, District Executives and Youth Council Representatives designed to measure youth program activity on the district and local levels. We obtained and reviewed published YRUU program materials and resources. We were also fortunate to have an advantage over past review committees in the emerging technology of on-line mailing lists through which we were able to solicit comments and observe lively discussions on youth programming among youth, advisors and religious educators.

The members of the YPRC would like to thank the UUA Board for the opportunity to serve on this committee. We hope the work we have done will have a beneficial impact on the lives of present and future Unitarian Universalist youth and the quality of Unitarian Universalist youth programming. We also want to express our appreciation to the UUA Department of Religious Education and especially the Youth Office staff for their cooperation and help with research. However, the Youth Programs Review Committee is wholly responsible for this report's comments and recommendations.

Summary of the Report

Overall we have found that youth programming in our religious movement is at its highest point of functioning in the past 25 years, as well as in a state of growth. We see the appointment of this committee and the opportunity to make this report as a positive indication in that it fulfills what we have observed as one of the most basic needs for successful youth programming—consistent, deliberate attention from adults. Because of the transitional nature of adolescence, it is easy to allow youth programs to fall in to third place, behind adult programs and children's religious education programs which, historically, local congregations and the larger movement have often seemed to regard as more immediate necessities. Happily, there is much evidence of efforts to change this perception.

However, it remains true that there is great variation in the degree and quality of youth programming throughout the association. Some congregations have active, successful youth groups and others, similarly situated with respect to size and budget, do not. Some districts have strong youth governing bodies offering a full calendar of conferences and activities, while others operate sporadically, going through repeated cycles of building and then rebuilding programs. Thus, at all levels, this association still has some distance to travel towards treating its youth programs as a basic, ordinary part of Unitarian Universalist religious life.

At its core, the Unitarian Universalist youth programming philosophy advocates the empowerment of youth through leadership opportunities. While the recommendations we have made in this report cover a wide variety of issues, all of them have been conceived with the goal of youth empowerment in mind. This goal necessitates a delicate balance between youth and adult power that seeks to give the youth as much responsibility as possible for creating and carrying out their own programs while also expecting adults to ensure a safe environment for the youth and protect them from the large-scale failures.

In the process of our review, it has been our observation that sometimes within an organizational structure patterns will evolve for getting a job done that may not be the best way to foster leadership for the youth involved—therefore serving to undermine the goal of youth empowerment. To maintain the necessary balance of power between youth and adults, the youth empowerment philosophy must be called to mind again and again. There can never be a final set of rules and procedures; there must always be adjustments made depending on the interests and abilities of the particular youth (and adults) involved. Many of our recommendations call for a reexamination of this balance of power so that our religious movement may achieve a more thorough and effective practice of its cherished youth empowerment philosophy.

Parallel to the issue of youth empowerment is the issue of adult responsibility. Accompanying an intention which seeks to give youth responsibility for the direction of their program, there must also be an understanding that the responsibility for ensuring that there is a program lies with the adults. In particular, it is the responsibility of the adults in our movement to see that there is a sufficient number of trained, competent adult youth group advisors available to work directly and consistently with our youth, and that these advisors have the support they need from their UU communities. This is an area we have given special attention to in this report.

Finally, we have every expectation that the youth of Unitarian Universalism will respond to this report with energy, thoughtfulness and creativity. It is our hope that the adult members of our religious movement will strive to match the youth's abundant vitality with their own deliberate and consistent love. As the YRUU Five-Year Review Committee noted in their 1989 report, Young people, when served well and included fully, enrich the life of any congregation. The Youth Focus at the 1996 General Assembly demonstrated that our youth have the potential to enrich the life of our entire movement. It should not need stating that when we serve our youth well, we not only serve the present life of our movement; indeed, we ensure our movement's future.

Progress of YRUU

A Brief History

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists was not created out of a primordial void. Those who were involved in the design of YRUU were able to draw upon structural and philosophical models coming from a rich history of Unitarian and Universalist youth organizations that date back as far as the 1890s. In the Universalist movement there was the Young People's Christian Union from 1889 to 1941 and Universalist Youth Fellowship from 1941 to 1953. The Unitarians had the Young People's Religious Union from 1896 to 1941 and American Unitarian Youth from 1941 to 1953. Then in 1953, Liberal Religious Youth (LRY) was formed as a combined Unitarian and Universalist youth organization, preceding the 1961 merger of the parent denominations by eight years (1). Our religious movement has much to be proud of in its long history of promoting leadership, worship and social action experiences for its youth population.

However, YRUU came into being during a time of crisis in the Unitarian Universalist youth movement. LRY, during its growth period in the 1950s and 60s, had been a vibrant, politically involved, largely youth-run, continent-wide network of federations and local groups providing a sense of religious community and UU identity to thousands of youth (2). In the late 60s, a series of decisions made by both youth leaders in LRY and adult executives in the UUA provided the youth organization with the autonomy it was seeking, but ultimately amounted to a form of abandonment on the part of Unitarian Universalist adults (3). This led to widespread alienation and distrust between congregation adults and LRY youth, seriously limiting LRY's ability to be effective on the local and district levels (4). In keeping with the times, there also inevitably arose problems with excessive behavior on the part of the youth. Unfortunately, despite LRY's past successes, by the early-70s it was largely the excesses that it was known for and to this day, people with no direct LRY experience are more likely to associate it with behavior problems than with the positive episodes in its history. (For a broader description of LRY from 1967 to 1982, see "Reflections on the History of LRY and the Transition to YRUU" by Wayne Arnason in Appendix D of this report.)

In 1976, in response to a growing concern over a lack of adult support for youth programming, the LRY Executive Committee asked the UUA Board to establish a Special Committee on Youth Programs (SCOYP). That committee's 1977 report stated "it is difficult to ignore the massive abdication of adult responsibility" (5) in the existing youth program. Although this would appear to vindicate LRY's call for more support from the UUA, the committee unfortunately also had to note that negative feelings toward LRY had become so entrenched that the dissolution of LRY and creation of a new program would possibly be the only way to adequately serve the future of UU youth (6).

This finding gave way to the formation of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists. In the summer of 1981, the first Common Ground conference was held at Carleton College in Northfield, MN, with district representation constituting an overall two-to-one youth-to-adult ratio. The conference undertook a democratic process through which the current leaders of LRY agreed to end its existence in order to transform it into a new youth organization. The next summer, the delegates of Common Ground II decided on the name Young Religious Unitarian Universalists and created the basic structure that is still in operation today. According to Rev. Wayne Arnason, a former LRYer who was hired by the UUA Board to shepherd the restructuring process, "It took great courage and insight for the LRY leaders of that time to see that the organization they loved had to die in order to survive for future generations of youth, and I believe that is exactly what happened" (7). On January 1, 1983, YRUU was born.

Young Religious Unitarian Universalists

The intention of Common Ground was to form a youth organization based on a model of youth/adult collaboration rather than youth autonomy in order to bring the district and local levels back into a constructive relationship with the continental leadership. But the youth, even with their history of autonomy, were not necessarily the hardest ones to bring to the table of collaboration. In 1989, the YRUU Five-Year Review Committee report, while highly supportive of YRUU, pointed to many of the same inadequacies in adult involvement that the SCOYP report brought out, and that we find ourselves having to reiterate here. Their report states, "Adult involvement in YRUU has improved somewhat from the 'massive abdication' found by SCOYP in 1977, but it is still far below what we feel is necessary" (8). This problem, while showing improvement from 1989, remains today.

However, this committee also notes with interest that the overall tone of the Five-Year Review Committee report seems to reflect a continuing emphasis on the development of youth/adult collaboration within YRUU. This is not surprising considering the origins of the organization. Our committee, on the other hand, has found in discussions at all levels of our movement an unquestioning acceptance of the collaboration between youth and adults with the growth area being in an increasing consciousness of and emphasis on the philosophy of youth empowerment. What emerges from this is a picture of UU youth programming over the past 20 years which has evolved from a guiding philosophy of youth autonomy, which created a crisis of confidence on the part of adult UUs, to youth/adult collaboration, which sought to bridge a chasm of hostility and distrust between the generations, to youth empowerment, which is now being differentiated from youth autonomy and reemphasized as a philosophical priority. The fact that the larger

movement can comfortably return to the philosophy of youth empowerment is the clearest possible indication that a great deal of adult confidence has been restored in youth programming since the crisis of the mid-70s. This is an accomplishment deserving of celebration.

But it also indicates the need for adult involvement to be more conscious and intentional than ever. The demise of LRY demonstrated that youth empowerment is only meaningful and can only be maintained when it is done in direct relationship with adults. A failure on the part of adult UUs to participate in that relationship amounts to abandonment of the youth.

Youth Empowerment

The issue of youth empowerment vs. adult responsibility is simply one of balance. LRY was a membership organization which directly elected its continental leaders, but had minimal contact with the UUA. In contrast, continental YRUU was conceived to exist in a more cooperative relationship with the UUA and thereby structured as a service organization with youth staff selected through an application process by the elected members of the YRUU Youth Council's Steering Committee. However, in the planning of the new organization's structure, the specific definition of the relationship between YRUU and the UUA was left intentionally vague. In part, this ambiguity was designed to reflect the developmental tension between youth and adults, but it was also specifically intended to be somewhat unclear about the balance of power between the UUA Board and the YRUU Youth Council (9).

The vagueness of the UUA/YRUU relationship has helped YRUU, especially in its formative years as members struggled to learn how to put into practice the concept of youth/adult collaboration. But it has also burdened recent generations of youth leaders, for whom the youth/adult tensions of the 1970s are not an issue, because it fails to provide a clear model for putting into practice the overarching philosophy of youth empowerment. In order for YRUU to be a truly empowered youth organization, the UUA and YRUU together need to more clearly define the balance of power between them.

Despite this one area of ambiguity, the structure of YRUU provides youth leadership with a great deal of power to run their organization. We encourage the youth of our religious movement to recognize the power they have been given and exercise it to the fullest extent of their abilities.

Adult Support Of Youth Programming

The importance of wide-ranging adult involvement in youth programming was the biggest lesson learned from the dissolution of Liberal Religious Youth. LRY's overemphasis on youth autonomy created a deficiency of adult involvement on the continental level. As a result, when hostility arose towards LRY from the denomination, the relative lack of adult voices advocating on behalf of the organization only increased the youth/adult communication gap.

On the local and district levels, successful youth programming is even more dependent on the interest of adults. The 1977 SCOYP report found that "Where there is evidence of adult interest, concern, involvement, sensitivity and continuity, there is apt to be strong youth activity. Where there is neglect, noninvolvement, lack of adult concern or continuity, the programs are most apt to be weak or nonexistent"(10).

Again, the success of this relationship is dependent on balance. The fine line between supportive adult involvement and inappropriate adult management must be actively monitored to remain true to our goal of empowering our youth. When adults take too much control of youth programs they undermine the goal of youth empowerment.

However, there is a potential in YRUU for youth group advisors to misapply the concept of youth empowerment by subverting their own needs in the interests of not disempowering the youth. It is essential that it be understood throughout this denomination that advisors require their own "care and feeding" (i.e., support and training) and that this care and feeding of youth advisors is an adult responsibility. While seasoned youth can be involved in the process of training advisors to the extent that their leadership abilities allow, it is not the youth's responsibility to make sure advisors are trained. Neither is it their responsibility to enforce the code of ethics and to remove an advisor who is exhibiting unhealthy personal boundaries. Youth empowerment does not make it the youth's job to recognize the need for advisors to be trained, supported and appreciated; this responsibility lies with congregation and association adults.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many religious educators, no doubt overburdened with the younger ages, continue to give a low priority to their congregation's youth group, or even simply the congregation's youth. To be sure, there is much evidence of individual efforts to correct this situation, but there is also a need for an active exploration of the relationship between religious education and youth programming, on both a practical and philosophical level. There are touchy issues involved—by putting youth groups under the heading of religious education (i.e., "Church School") are we disempowering youth? On the other hand, by not doing so are we neglecting them? Many local advisors expressed a wish for more high school level curriculum. The UUA thrust in

recent years has been away from adult-led programming in favor of developing youth leadership. The result is that the UUA offers very few high school curriculum resources.

The most significant innovation in our religious movement's approach to youth in recent years has been the "Five Components of Balanced Youth Programming." The seeds of this concept were first planted in an essay entitled "Visions for Youth" by Eugene B. Navias that appears in the appendix of the Five-Year Review Committee's report (11). Over the years, this vision has been honed, refined and put into great effect through inclusion in advisor trainings, Ministry with Youth Renaissance Modules and the literature that comes out of the youth office.

In brief, the five components are: 1) learning experiences, 2) community building, 3) worship, 4) social action, 5) and leadership development (12). Advisors, religious educators and youth leaders are encouraged to incorporate some part of each component into their program, but it is also understood that the degree of each will always vary depending on the needs and inclinations of a particular group. Most importantly, the "Five Components" provide validation and acknowledgement of the whole range of needs that youth have. According to this model, "hanging out" (i.e., community building) has as much place in the religious life of a young person as committed social action does, and leadership development is its own learning experience with as much value as what might be gained from a structured curriculum.

The "Five Components of Balanced Youth Programming" were put forth by the Five-Year Review Committee as a way to begin to address the need for a statement of UUA philosophy of youth ministry (13), a need that had also been cited in the SCOYP report (14). While we applaud the Five Components model, this committee finds that, in addition, clearly and broadly stated philosophical guidelines are needed that can inform decisions on issues involving youth/adult power balance, advisor/DRE relations, adult accountability, parental involvement, group confidentiality and the inclusiveness of local groups (i.e., openness to youth with non-UU parents).

Our cherished philosophy of youth empowerment in a liberal religious context—incorporating the value we place on youth/adult collaboration, balanced youth programming, building community, physical and emotional safety, spiritual nurturance and affirmation—is thorough, consistent and well-grounded. It is the sacred piece of what we do and our unique gift to youth. But, we do it haphazardly and sporadically as long as it is not understood at all levels of our association.

Diversity In YRUU

We feel it appropriate to make a special mention of efforts in YRUU towards racial and cultural diversity in view of Unitarian Universalism's recent anti-racist and anti-oppression initiatives. Unsurprisingly, YRUU's past progress in these areas has generally been only as much or as little as that of its parent organization. This year, however, youth leaders have responded to the UUA's call for action in a number of ways. Among these efforts we note that the 1996 Youth Council passed four resolutions on racial justice issues including a resolution to create and distribute a resource for promoting youth-specific anti-racism materials and a resolution calling for at least one anti-racist program to be offered by YRUU each year (which was fulfilled for 1996-97 at the Social Justice Conference in Washington); that the 1996 Youth Council Racial Justice Working Group created a process-oriented program for congregations and youth groups (15) distributed in the fall 1996 issue of Spider; that YRUU's Steering Committee has met with Mel Hoover and Christine Murphy of the UUA Office of Racial and Cultural Diversity to plan YRUU involvement with anti-racism efforts and the Youth Office has been following up on the work begun in that meeting; and that the 1996-97 social action theme and the spring 1997 issue of Synapse have Racial Justice as their theme.

The Youth Advisor's Handbook, published this year, sets forth YRUU's operating philosophy in regard to diversity: "A YRUU youth group is the perfect environment for encouraging youth to live out their Unitarian Universalist values by creating a just, compassionate, and affirming environment. This means creating a safe community that welcomes gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered youth or youth from gay or lesbian families, youth of color, youth with different physical abilities, and youth from various socioeconomic classes. ... YRUU groups can help congregations walk their talk around issues of racial and economic justice" (16).

The Transition From YRUU

Some comment should be made on the prevalent belief that many of our youth wind up leaving Unitarian Universalism after their rich experience with YRUU. The accompanying assumption that this is simply a normal part of the life process—rebellious against religion in general while the tasks of young adulthood are encountered—needs to be challenged. Among adult UUs, our so-called "come outers" (those who have been raised in another faith tradition) may regard it as normal to rebel against their childhood religion. Similarly, our so-called "come inners" (those who were raised without a faith tradition) may regard it as normal in young adulthood to not be interested in religion. However, the recent increased activity in campus ministry and the Unitarian Universalist Young Adult Network shows that there is a place and a need for ministry to youth in transition to young adulthood.

In recent years, many young adult former YRUUers have spoken of the difficulty they have had in making the transition from the YRUU experience into the adult congregation. One way of identifying the source of this difficulty is suggested by the typology of new, mid, and deep UUs. Briefly, “new” UUs are the beginners in our movement, who are learning about the UU way of being religious, and who often have issues with their former religious tradition or their lack of religious grounding. “Mid” and “deep” UUs have moved beyond introductory and reactionary involvement and into the development of their own sustaining spirituality and religious involvement, and to helping others in their quest. Of necessity, much of our adult programming is aimed at new UUs. But our youth who have participated in YRUU have moved past that stage and need opportunities for religious depth and sustaining involvement. We must remind our congregations that our YRUU-experienced young adults are not beginners at Unitarian Universalism. We cannot expect them to be well served by programming intended for new UUs.

We encourage our congregations to keep in mind that YRUU-experienced young adults have been empowered for active involvement and leadership in Unitarian Universalism, and that they are often ready for roles which their “come outer” or “come inner” adult co-religionists are less prepared to handle. Conversely, we encourage our youth moving into adulthood to keep in mind that part of what their empowerment has prepared them for is both to find their own place as an adult in our religious movement, and help pass on the gifts which our religious tradition has given them. Our congregations and young adult former YRUUers have much they can give to each other.

(1) For a complete history of Unitarian Universalist youth organizations from 1889 to 1980 see *Follow the Gleam*, by Wayne Arnason, Skinner House Books, 1980. (2) *Follow the Gleam*, pp. 170-174. (3) “Reflections on the History of LRY and the Transition to YRUU”, by Wayne Arnason, appendix. (4) “Report of the Special Committee On Youth Programs to the UUA Board of Trustees” (SCOYP Report), November, 1977, p. 9. (5) SCOYP Report, p. 1. (6) SCOYP Report, p.13-15. (7) Arnason essay, appendix. (8) “YRUU: A Five-Year Review of Programs for Youth”, April, 1989, p.2. (9) Five-Year Review, p.28. (10) SCOYP Report, p.7. (11) Five-Year Review, p.32. (12) *Youth Advisor’s Handbook*, by Shell Tain, Unitarian Universalist Association, 1996, p.25. (13) Five-Year Review, p.3. (14) SCOYP Report, p. 7. (15) Youth Council resolutions (16) *Youth Advisor’s Handbook*, p.14-15.

Findings Part I: YRUU and Youth Empowerment

YRUU Structure

The structure of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists, originally established by the members of Common Ground, consists of a variety of youth/adult collaborations, all of which are represented on the YRUU Youth Council. As the governing body of YRUU, Youth Council meets once a year during the summer and serves many of the same functions that General Assembly does for the UUA in its ability to make policies, adopt themes for the coming year's programming, pass resolutions, and offer a supportive community of Unitarian Universalists. The Youth Council is composed of 24 youth chosen by the districts; three at-large youth; eight adults confirmed by the Board of Trustees, including one member of the Board of Trustees; and the previous year's Steering Committee. (For a complete description of the structure of YRUU, see "Young Religious Unitarian Universalist Policies and Procedures", available from the Youth Office of the UUA, updated 1996.)

The executive body of Youth Council is Steering Committee, which meets three times per year to govern the affairs of YRUU in the interim between Youth Council meetings. The eight voting members include five youth and one adult elected by the Youth Council, the UUA Board liaison to Youth Council, and the Position on Appraisal. The Youth Office staff serve on Steering Committee in a non-voting, ex-officio manner. The function of Steering Committee is to carry out the mandates and policy decisions of Youth Council, to choose the moderator for Youth Council, to recommend to the Board of Trustees the adult-at-large members of Youth Council, to recommend candidates for YRUU Programs Specialist to the UUA Administration, and to plan and implement the annual Continental Conference and Youth Council meeting.

The Youth Office staff is the third factor in this structure consisting of the Youth Programs Director (YPD) and two YRUU Programs Specialists (YPSs) serving in alternating one-year appointments. Being that they are the point of intersection between YRUU and the UUA, the Youth Office staff have the difficult task of balancing their responsibilities to YRUU with their responsibilities to the UUA. Whereas the Youth Programs Director reports to the Director of the Religious Education Department, he or she is also "responsible to the Youth Council and Steering Committee in regard to YRUU programming" (YRUU P&P, Art. 7.1.1). The YRUU Programs Specialists, on the other hand, while employed by the UUA, specifically "serve the members of YRUU by fulfilling the responsibilities set for them by Youth Council and Steering Committee, as well as the ongoing responsibilities of the publication of Synapse and Spider, the coordination of the Continental Social Action Network, the coordination of the Advisors Network, and the general maintenance of the Youth Office." (YRUU By-laws, Art. 2.4)

The fourth component in this structure is YRUU's relationship to the UUA Board of Trustees, which has approval power over the Youth Council and Steering Committee's budget and by-law decisions. Finally, YRUU is connected to the districts through Youth Council representation from the district youth governing bodies (called variously the Youth Adult Committee, District Youth Committee, etc.) which often also have representation on the district board of trustees.

This structure seems to be functioning reasonably well for the involved parties at the continental level, including Steering Committee, Youth Council and the Youth Office working in conjunction with the UUA. However, there is a structural flaw in the persistent lack of communication between the continental leadership and the district and local constituencies. A number of continental youth leaders interviewed felt that while Youth Council is a valuable leadership opportunity, its effectiveness does not always extend beyond the carrying out of its annual business meeting. There appears to be a discrepancy between what is expected of Youth Council Representatives (YCRs) as expressed in the job description (YRUU P&P, p. 37) and what is actually practiced. The YCRs are not sufficiently conducting the business of Youth Council back in their districts, including, most importantly, the dissemination of information on Youth Council initiatives. YCRs need to be more accountable in the course of their two-year term for spreading the benefit of their Youth Council experience throughout their district.

Additionally, the relationship between YRUU and the UUA needs to be formally defined. Originally, YRUU was established as an "organization of the UUA" (YRUU By-laws, Art. 3.2), which gives it a sort of non-status since neither the UUA By-laws nor the YRUU By-laws clearly articulate the definition of an "organization of the UUA". Though the founders of YRUU were intentionally ambiguous on this point due to the troubled history of LRY, the circumstances are different now. A status of "sponsored organization" would benefit YRUU in concrete ways in that it would acknowledge YRUU's status as the UUA's youth program and would give YRUU more visibility within the association by ensuring a UUA Directory listing and programming slots at General Assembly. "Sponsored" status would reflect the fact that YRUU both receives its funding from and must have its by-laws approved by the UUA Board.

Finally, at the request of a number of current youth leaders, we looked at the budget under which YRUU operates. It was the opinion of these youth that YRUU has no real control over its own budget. While it is essential that the UUA continues its financial support for the maintenance of YRUU, giving the youth almost no control over the allocation of youth program money is disempowering. We do not advocate leaving youth with sole control over their entire program budget since the history of LRY illustrates that this

amounts to an abdication of adult mentorship and responsibility and can therefore result in the deterioration of youth programming. But we do feel it is important for YRUU to have a source of income which the Youth Council and Steering Committee can apply at their own discretion to interests outside the normal maintenance of the organization.

Happily, bitter lessons were not all that LRY bequeathed to YRUU. LRY had its own endowment which was transferred over to YRUU and currently provides an income of approximately \$4,000 per year. This money has been simply folded into the Youth Office budget, but we see it as a substantial enough sum to provide the YRUU Youth Council and Steering Committee with a fund to use at their own discretion. We encourage the UUA Board to grant this money directly to YRUU with the understanding that that amount will be replaced in the youth program budget from General Fund monies. We also hope that YRUU will endeavor to supplement this grant of the LRY endowment income with its own fundraising efforts.

Youth Council

Despite the aforementioned communication problems, we find that Youth Council is an effective governing body which fulfills its purposes as stated in the YRUU By-Laws. However, there are two issues which arose in interviews with Youth Council members. First, many YCRs expressed concern that Youth Office staff are designated to break any tie that occurs in the Steering Committee election process. This does not happen as a result of a documented policy, rather it has been assumed by the Youth Office to be a precedent. Though this may appear to be a minor issue, it necessitates a reminder to Youth Council and Steering Committee that they have the right and responsibility to review, and alter if necessary, their election procedures. It is also the right and responsibility of these governing bodies to set their own agenda for business meetings.

The second issue, mentioned repeatedly by past and present Steering Committee members, concerns the role of Steering Committee at Youth Council. The current practice is that Steering Committee members do not speak during the plenary session unless the moderator calls on them to supply a point of information. Again, on investigation we find that there is no documented policy requiring this practice. We therefore encourage Youth Council to review their policy concerning this issue and to take into consideration the invaluable role that modeled leadership can have in governance. Denying a voice to the leaders of an organization during its deliberation and decision-making processes has the potential to be counterproductive to that organization's effective functioning.

Steering Committee

Due to the operational challenges that occur within an organization as large as YRUU, from time to time duties will shift in ownership. We have observed instances in which functions intended for the Youth Council have been taken up by the Steering Committee, while responsibilities intended for the Steering Committee have fallen into the hands of the Youth Office. Although these shifts may serve the interests of expediency, we are concerned that the more these governing bodies are relieved of specific duties, the less investment the members will feel in the overall organization.

We note that the Steering Committee's internal structure, being based on consensus-style decision-making using a rotating facilitator, does not include a chair or president whose job is to set the agenda, convene the meeting, etc. We urge the Steering Committee to review its internal structure and explore ways to create more internal responsibility for specific tasks. This would also help maintain the balance of power between the Steering Committee and the Youth Office.

We also question the value of granting "powers" to governing bodies that are difficult to utilize in practical terms. The YRUU By-laws (Art. 5.5) state: "At each Youth Council meeting, the Council shall vote upon whether to approve the Moderator chosen by the Steering Committee. If the Youth Council does not approve the Moderator, a Moderator shall be elected from among the Council members." We find it improbable that the Youth Council would ever exercise their "power" to overthrow Steering Committee's choice for Moderator knowing that that individual's flight and accommodations have already been paid for by the UUA. For such power to be meaningful, there needs to be a practicable method through which to exercise it.

Finally, we have observed that, with elected Steering Committee members and appointed YRUU Program Specialists all serving one-year terms, in the highest levels of YRUU governance there tends to be an absence of youth leaders who have ever had the same responsibility twice (e.g., setting the agenda for Youth Council, planning and programming Con Con, etc.). This creates a lack of continuity from year to year and prevents the development of institutional memory. We hope that as Steering Committee further exercises its power, individual members will be motivated to run for second terms.

The Youth Office

There are two areas that need clarification in regard to the functioning of the Youth Office. First, the most recent job description on file for the position of YRUU Program Specialist dates back to May of 1983, when YRUU was in its infancy. In view of the changes that have occurred within YRUU over the years (especially the title change from “Youth Programs Specialist” to “YRUU Programs Specialist” (YRUU By-laws, Art. 7.2) and the change in age range from 12-22 to 14-20 (YRUU By-laws, Art. 3.1), it is time to bring this job description up to date. Particular attention needs to be given to the question of whether this position is an “internship” (as it is advertised), implying a student engaging in a carefully supervised apprentice-like role, or a “specialist” (as the title suggests), indicating one who has a superior degree of knowledge in a particular field.

Secondly, we note that there is no formal procedure in use for employee performance evaluation. The YPD and the Director of the Religious Education Department meet periodically to review the progress of the YPSs. The YPD also meets regularly with the YPSs to discuss questions and concerns, and to review work. As each YPS finishes his or her term, there is an informal exit interview between the YPS and YPD to evaluate the experience. Yet, within these various discussions there is no formal avenue through which a YPS or Steering Committee member may evaluate other YPSs, the YPD, the Religious Education department, their own progress, or the job itself. Some of these concerns can be expressed through the informal processes, but for consistency and continuity a formal evaluation procedure needs to be implemented.

Conferences, Trainings And Continental Events

Continental Conference

The Continental Conference of YRUU (Con Con) is the annual week-long summer conference that serves as the ultimate model of youth leadership in our movement. Each year, the conference is located in a different region of the U.S. to facilitate geographical diversity. Youth Council selects the theme and the Steering Committee is responsible for the planning, programming and staffing with a member of Steering Committee serving as Dean. Con Con programming includes week-long workshops, one-shot workshops, special events and worships in an inclusive, supportive atmosphere created by youth leaders.

Con Con is an important event in YRUU because of the opportunity it provides for older youth to demonstrate their leadership skills and for younger youth, as well as advisors, to observe effective youth leadership in action. For many youth this is an eye-opening experience that inspires them to take new skills back to their districts and local youth groups. However, formal leadership training should also be offered at each Con Con.

Youth Caucus at General Assembly

Since the 1960s, the interests of UU youth have been represented at General Assembly by the Youth Caucus. In recent years, Youth Caucus attendance has ranged from 50 to 80. However, the 1996 Youth Focus at General Assembly attracted a total of 348 youth participants, making it possibly the largest youth gathering in UU history. Through workshops, worship services and presentations at the GA plenary, this event was highly successful in exposing over 3,000 UU adults to our unique philosophy of youth empowerment and promoting youth programming as a priority in our denomination.

Based on the energy and excitement that the 1996 GA generated among youth, it is realistic to expect that in future years youth participation at GA will be significantly greater than pre-1996. Though there have been some efforts to continue to support youth programming at GA, there has been no increase in funding from the UUA to support these efforts. The resulting void is likely to have, at the least, a dampening impact on the positive momentum gained in 1996.

Leadership Development Conferences

In 1994, the UUA Board allocated \$8,000 to the Youth Office for a \$10,000 program to train 20 youth and adult leaders of Leadership Development Conferences (LDCs). These leaders, working in youth/adult pairs, were then available to the districts to lead weekend conferences attended by up to 40 youth and adults, ideally in a two-to-one ratio. This program has been highly successful, facilitating an exponential increase in leadership training throughout the association, such that in the fall of 1996, with another \$10,000 from the UUA Board, a second group of leaders were trained. The conferences are almost unanimously acclaimed for having a galvanizing effect on youth leadership within a district, as well as helping adults get on board with the philosophy of youth empowerment. In evaluations, participants report feeling energized and excited about getting back to their youth groups to use the skills and knowledge they have gained. Many Youth Adult Committees experience a revitalization after an LDC has been held in their district.

In Leadership Development Conferences, as well as in advisor trainings, there is a focus placed on the need for building community in a youth group by strengthening group trust and caring. “The Five Steps to Building Community”, a pamphlet by Jenna Martin

adapted from the book *Building Community in Youth Groups* by Denny Rydberg, uses bonding, opening up, affirming, stretching and deeper sharing as a framework for understanding the process a youth group goes through to achieve a deeper and deeper state of connectedness. Participants at LDCs have an opportunity to experience this process as small groups in turn take the larger group through each of the steps in the course of the weekend. Youth and adults alike most often credit this section of the conference as their greatest learning experience.

Social Justice Conference

In 1997, the UU Social Justice Office in Washington jointly sponsored with the Youth Office the first-ever YRUU National Social Justice Conference. The four-day conference included 30 participants selected on the basis of a written essay and geographical representation. The conference was funded by a \$4000 grant from the Fund for Unitarian Universalism and \$1000 from the Youth Office budget. This committee commends this initiative and endorses further development of this conference as an annual event. Given that social action is one of the five components of balanced youth programming and the only one not represented in any other annual continental YRUU event, this conference offers a needed opportunity to bolster UU youth involvement in social action.

In view of the demise of the UU-UNO conference due to over-reliance on grant funding, we suggest that the Youth Council seek a more stable source of funding for the YRUU National Social Justice Conference.

Spirituality Development Conference

The first-ever YRUU spirituality conference, to be called “In the Spirit: The Continental Spirituality Development Conference” is planned for May of 1998. This conference will train youth and adult Spirituality Development Conference leaders who, in similar fashion to the Leadership Development Conference leaders, will work in teams of one adult and one youth. It is the goal of the conference planners that, to the degree possible, the adult leaders will be ministers. These leaders will then be available to districts to lead conferences that will train people in planning and carrying out worship experiences and developing worship tools such as songbooks and rituals.

In addition to providing a welcome forum for developing spirituality among UU youth, we hope this conference will also have the affect of bolstering ministerial involvement in YRUU.

Recommendations

Recommendation: That Youth Council review the current Youth Council Representative job description and explore ways to hold Youth Council Representatives accountable for the dissemination of information to their district.

Recommendation: That district youth governing bodies (Youth Adult Committees, District Youth Committees, etc.) also explore ways to hold their Youth Council Representatives accountable for the dissemination of the continental-level decisions and information throughout the districts.

Recommendation: That individual members of the UUA Board of Trustees take a mentoring interest in the Youth Council Representative(s) from their district(s) in order to help nurture the leadership skills required to be an effective district representative.
Recommendation: That the UUA Board of Trustees recognize YRUU as a “sponsored organization” and that YRUU be represented in the UUA Directory as such.

Recommendation: That the UUA Board of Trustees place the LRY endowment income, currently integrated in the Youth Office budget, under the direct control of YRUU with the understanding that that amount will be replaced in the youth program budget from General Fund monies; that the Steering Committee of YRUU be the executors of the LRY endowment income at the will of the Youth Council.

Recommendation: That the Steering Committee, with input from the Youth Office, create an updated job description for the position of YRUU Programs Specialist.

Recommendation: That the Steering Committee, the Youth Programs Director and the Director of the Religious Education Department together establish formal evaluation processes, including: an exit interview between the YRUU Programs Specialist and the Director of the Religious Education Department; an opportunity at the last Steering Committee meeting prior to their departure, for each YPS to give an evaluation of their experience; and an opportunity for Steering Committee to have input into the annual employee evaluation of the Youth Programs Director.

Recommendation: That Steering Committee consider implementing specific role differentiations among members, such as someone to set each meeting’s agenda, someone to convene the meeting, etc.

Recommendation: That the Steering Committee include in Continental Conference programming each year an opportunity for leadership training.

Recommendation: That the General Assembly Planning Committee, the Youth Office, the Steering Committee and the Youth Caucus Business Manager cooperate in a task force to address youth participation and activities at General Assembly.

Findings Part II: Adult Support

It is seemingly paradoxical but nonetheless true that to sustain a genuinely empowering youth program, there must be a high level of committed and competent adult support. It then follows that to sustain this level of adult support, the adults themselves must be supported. This is one of the greatest areas found by this committee to be in need of improvement.

The most essential level of adult support is the work done by youth advisors. However, the task of supporting youth advisors cannot be adequately addressed without an understanding of the need to reinforce adult involvement on all levels. Ministers, religious educators and church board members must be encouraged in their support of youth through education and recognition for youth programming successes. At the other end of the spectrum, the volunteers who provide support by driving youth to conferences or helping in the kitchen must be acknowledged not only explicitly but also in implicit ways such as expense reimbursement and sharing of responsibility. Only by striving to spread an ever-wider adult umbrella over our efforts to empower our youth will Unitarian Universalist youth programming be protected from the destructive effects of generational division.

Care And Feeding Of Youth Advisors

Youth advisors are the adults working on the front lines of youth programming. The local youth group advisor not only makes the greatest commitment but often is putting his or her whole self on the line to serve youth. The beginning advisor who expects his or her new role to only entail showing up on a Sunday morning or evening and making a couple of phone calls during the week soon learns that this is not like teaching Sunday School. Most advisors find themselves committing more and more of their time and energy, not from the expansion of duties as much as from the specific relationship that must develop between an advisor and the youth in order for the experience to be meaningful.

For many adolescents, the youth advisor is the first adult figure they have encountered who offers a non-parental, non-authoritarian relationship. What the youth needs from this adult, and what the sensitive, committed advisor naturally provides, is someone who will be a mentor, role model, lay minister and friend. In the Youth Advisor's Handbook (page 6), Shell Tain writes, "Who you are with youth is far more important than what tasks you perform." What the beginning advisor soon discovers is that being who you are in a meaningful relationship with youth will lead you to, in the words of one advisor, "assume a lot of risk and responsibility, and stretch yourself spiritually and personally in ways that make you vulnerable." As an institution, it is unfair to ask people to do this without also offering them ongoing guidance and support.

The following sections discuss in more detail some of the specific areas concerning youth advisors that have been found to be in need of attention.

Advisor Training

In 1993, the UUA Board allocated \$8,000 to the Youth Office to sponsor a \$10,000 continental program for training 20 people from across the continent to be leaders of advisor training workshops. These leaders were then available to be brought in by the districts to lead weekend advisor trainings. While local and district advisors who have had the opportunity to attend these trainings speak well of them, their total numbers seem to be few. In general, the overwhelming message from advisors is a need for more training, more often with more information on more specific issues. The 1997-98 UUA budget includes \$8,000 for another continental training of advisor training leaders.

There is clearly an association-wide need for a fuller and more broadly disseminated articulation of youth empowerment. Advisor training is an ideal forum in which to promote this philosophy. In fact, many of the issues cited by advisors indicate a need for help in sorting out the youth/adult power balance. Questions were raised about how far to let things go before asserting authority (Forbid climbing trees? Or only forbid climbing high voltage telephone poles?), guidelines for personal disclosure (How much should one reveal of one's personal life?) and clarification of appropriate boundaries (to hug or not to hug).

Also cited in discussions, however, was a need for accompanying training in human relations, adolescent development and psychology, and skills for dealing with the emotional/psychological problems of youth. An advisor on the on-line mailing list states about his local group, "Our youth tend to have a high incidence of broken home lives, drug use and other risk behaviors. Some training in how to recognize danger signs and provide basic levels of counseling would be of immense help."

Advisor training content needs to clearly differentiate the specific needs and challenges of junior high age youth groups. In view of the fact that this is often the most difficult age for which to attract adult volunteers, it is particularly important that these adults are provided with training and support appropriate to the pre-adolescent age group.

Finally, a critical area in need of further development is the promotion of safe congregations and sexual ethics. Since the mid-1980s, the UUA has put increasing focus on issues of clergy sexual misconduct leading to training programs and efforts at increasing awareness among congregation members. This work has been done to great beneficial effect, constituting something of a revolution within our religious movement.

However, this work has been applied to youth advisors as if they are an extension of religious education teachers. To raise awareness of sexual ethics among youth advisors, attention needs to be given to how the challenge of maintaining sexual boundaries between adults and adolescents is different from adult to adult boundaries and adult to child. Being that adolescence is by definition a process of coming into sexual identity, youth are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation on many different levels. And given that youth are developmentally and physically so close to adulthood, even the most well-meaning adult can find it difficult to establish the appropriate personal boundary. The “Code of Ethics for Persons Working with Children and Youth in UUA Sponsored Programs” (see Appendix E) was designed to provide a safeguard against adult-to-youth sexual exploitation. But advisors need more explicit help in navigating the many gray areas of sexual boundaries and the wide-ranging and complex issues of personal safety between youth and adults.

Any reevaluation of advisor training must also look at problems of promotion and accessibility. The Youth Office reports that the trainings are not requested or attended as much as they had hoped. Yet advisors in the field seem to be clamoring for more training. This contradiction needs to be resolved.

Supervision And Support

Along with adequate training, it is essential that advisors have access to ongoing support. Many Unitarian Universalist adults have little awareness of the intense level of problems our youth can bring to their youth group. Depression, suicide, rape, drugs, anorexia, bulimia, parental abuse, the effects of divorce and the death of friends are all too common experiences for even our own teenagers.

An advisor from the Mid-west states, “At my church, when I said something about ‘being there’ for the kids, an older member of the congregation said, ‘Be there or be square. Be here now.’ Not very helpful when you’re dealing with youth depression, suicide, incarceration, etc. I feel that many adults in the congregation would prefer to just not know.”

Clearly, these circumstances also have the potential for putting advisors at risk—emotionally as well as morally and legally—which is a significant factor leading to advisor burn-out. To adequately support advisors who are committed to serving youth with whatever problems they may bring, an institutional standard needs to be promoted whereby local youth advisors are connected with a designated resource person capable of clinical pastoral consultation to provide them, on an ad hoc basis, with ministry and counseling supervision.

A system of advisor support and supervision must also include a clear understanding of who the advisor is accountable to (the Director or Minister of Religious Education, the Parish Minister, the Chair of the Religious Education Committee, etc.), a method for performance evaluation and feedback, and procedures for removing inappropriate adults. Some advisors advocate an institutional standard of regular rotations of service (e.g., two advisors serve alternating two-year terms, or advisors being required to take a year off after three years of service).

In 1994, Youth Council established a guideline stating that continental youth advisors must be over 25 years of age, but that individuals between the ages of 21 and 25 could serve as “junior advisors” under the mentorship of an over-25 advisor. On the district and local levels, there is confusion on how to apply this standard and concerns that junior advisors may need more or a different type of training and support, as well as questions as to the wisdom of allowing junior advisors at all.

Finally, any discussion of youth empowerment is bound to have as its subtext, whether acknowledged or not, a myriad of questions around issues of adult legal liability. Over and over again, on questionnaires and in interviews, advisors expressed a need for more information about their legal liabilities. To truly promote leadership in youth it is essential that matters of legal liability and accountability are thoroughly explored and understood by all concerned adults. Otherwise, liability anxieties will linger in an insidious, unstated manner and will have the potential to subtly undermine any efforts at genuine empowerment of the youth.

Communication

There appears to be a serious communication gap between the continental and district levels of YRUU and the local churches. Advisors repeatedly complained about not getting information and not having access to resources, or getting too little of it and getting it too late. At the 1996 General Assembly Advisor Hearing, the advisors expressed a poignant mix of relief at suddenly connecting with so much information, along with irritation at having had to labor in isolation for so long. They were careful to say their inability to get information was not for lack of trying. This communication problem may be a symptom of underlying philosophical and

practical separations between religious education and youth programming. An oft-cited example was of youth resources reaching the DRE's desk and never making it into the advisor's hands.

One way to address this communication gap is with more district level support for youth advisors, such as a district Youth Programming Consultant who is charged primarily with the job of supporting and training youth advisors, along the lines of the emerging district Religious Education Consultants. But the development of a strong and comprehensive advisor networking and advocacy organization is another critical component for fostering better communication. Such an organization would provide a forum for sharing information and resources, as well as give voice to youth advisors as a constituent body within the UUA. A potential model for this is the way that LREDA has served religious educators, taking into account the differences in professional status. According to the "YRUU Policies and Procedures Manual" (p. 28), theoretically, an advisor network already exists, but this "network" is more intended than actual since, without an organized body or continued support, it offers limited benefit to youth advisors laboring in isolation on the local level.

Ministry With Youth Renaissance Module

The Ministry With Youth Renaissance Module is a youth ministry training geared towards religious educators and ministers, many of whom are experiencing their first opportunity to focus solely on the needs of their congregation's youth. When it was first presented, it was heralded by participants as the "best module" they had taken.

The Ministry With Youth Renaissance Module was the first training forum to introduce the "Five Components of Balanced Youth Programming" developed by Eugene Navias and outlined in the Five-Year Review Committee report. The Religious Education Department could also consider adding to the curriculum the more recent program model on the "Five Steps to Building Community". This "Five Steps" model has been used to great benefit in the Leadership Development Conferences, and can help religious educators know what their youth advisors will be exposed to when they attend LDCs and advisor trainings.

The Ministry With Youth Renaissance Module serves a critical need in broadening general adult support for youth programming. In addition to being updated and made more accessible to religious educators, we would like to see it actively promoted to ministers and lay leaders. We believe that education about ministry with youth is an important educational component for our ministry and we hope that eventually all ministers will participate in this training module.

Recommendations

- **Recommendation:** That the UUA Board establish a task force to examine and make recommendations on youth advisor training and support for the purpose of reinforcing adult involvement in youth programming (especially on the local level); that this task force consider: advisor training (especially in regard to fostering youth leadership, adolescent development, healthy personal boundaries, and junior high advising), the development of clinical pastoral consultancy and the creation of an advisor networking and advocacy organization.
- **Recommendation:** That each district board encourage its local congregations to provide their youth advisors with a designated resource person for clinical/pastoral consultation; that the Youth Office and Department of Religious Education include this recommendation in advisor training and Ministry With Youth curriculum.
- **Recommendation:** That the Ministry With Youth Renaissance Module (which is geared towards religious educators and ministers) be offered at UU-related seminaries, be commended to the Department of Ministry and the UU Ministers Association for continuing education, and be considered for inclusion into the Extension Ministry training.
- **Recommendation:** That each district board make a thorough review of its mechanism for supporting youth advisors.

Findings Part III: Available Resources

Youth Programming Resources

Publications

Published resources for UU youth programming are developed and produced by the Youth Programs Director, the YRUU Programs Specialists, the Youth Council and its Steering Committee, the districts, local churches, and, from time to time, individual youth. New resources are continuously being created, so this review only captures a moment in time.

Given that the youth population is in a constant state of flux with leadership aging out as new inexperienced youth come in, resources and publications are important tools for passing along accumulated wisdom. Advisors, religious educators and ministers are continually asking for more resources in support of their ministry with youth. In order to be most effective, existing publications must be periodically updated and perpetually publicized so that those in need can readily find and use them. Currently, youth are asking for resources on worship, social action, building better youth groups, and issues concerning gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth.

In 1989, the YRUU Five-Year Review recommended the creation of a “new guide for group worship experiences for youth.” To date, this has not been fulfilled. However, there are worship resources available in the current handbooks as well as the Ministry With Youth Module reader. In addition, YRUU has been given a grant from the Fund for Unitarian Universalism to hold a Spirituality Conference which is scheduled for May 1998. One of the intended outcomes of the conference is the creation of a worship resource book.

Books

The following books have been published by the Youth Office in collaboration with the Youth Council and its Steering Committee:

- YACs to SACs: A Guide to District Programming, 1995.
- How to Be a Con Artist: Youth Conference Planning Handbook for Unitarian Universalists, Jason Happel et al, 1992.
- The Local Youth Group Program Handbook (currently being revised, expected in 1998).
- Youth Advisor’s Handbook, Shell Tain, 1996.

These handbooks are available through the UUA Bookstore, along with several books written by Christian educators on ministry to youth, games, and building community in youth groups. These books are publicized in the UUA Bookstore Catalog under Religious Education - Youth. A collection of recommended books and curricula is also displayed for browsing at the Ministry With Youth Renaissance Module, Advisor Trainings and Leadership Development Conferences, and a printed bibliography is provided to participants. In addition, the Ministry With Youth Renaissance Module includes a reader that is a good resource for information on the “Five Components of Balanced Youth Programming.” This reader is also distributed at Advisor Trainings.

We would like to commend the relatively recent publication dates of the above-listed handbooks. We also note the gap of over ten years since the most recent previous editions of the Youth Advisor’s Handbook and the Local Youth Group Program Handbook, published in 1984 and 1985, respectively.

Pamphlets

Youth Council has directed the Youth Office to provide the following pamphlets and handouts that introduce YRUU and support its values:

- Young Religious Unitarian Universalists
- Welcoming Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth into YRUU Resource for UU Youth who are Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender or Questioning
- Creating Rules in UU Youth Communities
- Recommended Racial Justice Action Projects (96-97)
- Con-Etiquette Compromise: Creating Smoking Policies
- District Youth Newsletter Handbook

- First Time Attendee Packet
- Principles for Establishment of Community
- Five Steps to Community Building
- Five Components to Balanced Youth Group Programming
- Consensus Decision-Making: What Makes it Work?
- Finding Consensus in a Meeting
- SAC PAC (for district social action coordinators)

These resources are provided to people on the local and district level by request and free of charge.

Periodicals

The Youth Office publishes Synapse, the YRUU newspaper which is mailed twice yearly to all congregations and all UU youth who request it; The Spider, an information packet designed to be the communications organ for Youth Council Representatives; and Youth Advisory, a newsletter on advisor issues sent to all advisors and congregations who request it. A section on "Youth" written by the Youth Office is included in each REACH packet.

Synapse, for which the YRUU Program Specialists serve as editors, is the primary communication link from the Youth Office to the YRUU population. A district or local group may submit their mailing list for Synapse subscription and those who attend the continental conference are also added. Recently, the Synapse mailing list has been about 12,000. The newspaper is budgeted for two issues a year at \$3500 per issue, which is a cutback from three issues that occurred in 1989. Occasionally in recent years, a two-page Synapse (in lieu of the third issue) appeared in the World (at a cost of \$2500). That budgetary item also no longer exists. The 1996-97 Steering Committee has gone on record as strongly recommending funding for another annual issue of Synapse.

Occasionally, questions arise concerning the appropriateness of specific content items for Synapse (i.e., four letter words, explicit material). Since Synapse is the communication arm of continental YRUU, the YRUU Steering Committee should be designated as the Synapse editorial board to advise the editors on content issues as needed.

Our interviews and information gathering suggests general approval for the publication, with the express desire for more issues, more often and more widely disseminated—again pointing to the ever-present need for better communication.

The Spider is a bi-monthly publication for YRUU Youth Council Representatives published by the Youth Office. It contains district reports, announcements of continental opportunities and other information and serves as the main avenue of communication from the Steering Committee and the Youth Office to the YCRs. In addition to being sent to Youth Council Representatives, The Spider is sent to district presidents, district religious education chairs, district executives and UUA field staff.

The Youth Advisory mailing list is difficult to update and maintain, but it is nonetheless critical. As discussed in the "Communication" section of "Adult Support," the establishment of an advisor networking and advocacy organization would do much to facilitate communication with and among youth advisors.

The Internet

The most exciting new information resource available to UU youth is the internet. The opportunity it provides for youth and adults across the continent to reach out and support one another is bound to have a positive impact on problems of communication, the dissemination of information and consistency in programming. Given the geographical isolation of many of our congregations and the number of UU youth without access to district or continental activities, this new way of creating electronic community will only increase in utilization. However, books, pamphlets and, especially, human resources will continue to be critical elements for running effective local, district, and continental programs.

Unitarian Universalists seem to have taken to the electronic highway with incredible speed. It is probably safe to say that most UU youth know more about computers than their elders, and many active YRUUers use the Internet regularly. The UUA has created a venue for UU youth who have internet access to connect with each other through YRUU-L, the on-line mailing list for YRUU. Religious educators have their own list, REACH-L, where discussion also can occur around youth issues. The heavy advisor use of the YRUU-L soon made apparent a need for a separate on-line mailing list for discussing advisor issues, and in November of 1996 ADVISOR-L was launched.

In addition to these lists, there is a YRUU web page (<http://uua.org/YRUU>) which is maintained by the Youth Office. Related web pages are being created all the time by district YACs, local groups and individual youth, bringing new opportunities for youth, advisors, DREs and ministers to share information and resources. At the time of this report, the YRUU Web Page includes:

- Creating rules in a UU community
- Creating smoking policies
- Information for first time conferees
- Post high school information
- How to create district newsletters
- Community building
- Five Components of balanced youth programming
- Racial justice projects
- How to run a successful meeting
- Code of Ethics
- Planning Youth Sundays
- Continental and District calendars of events

The YRUU Web Page, and on-line resources in general, should be utilized by YRUU and the Youth Office to the fullest extent possible. The Youth Advisor's Handbook and other available publications and pamphlets should be considered for dissemination through the internet, with the understanding that there are a number of factors to be weighed in such a decision. In addition, control of the YRUU Web Page should remain in the Youth Office, with Steering Committee serving as its editorial board.

Transitional Age Range Support Junior High

While many of the available youth group resources can be used with Junior High-aged youth, most congregations do not include 12- and 13-year-old youth in YRUU activities. DREs in particular have expressed a desire for the development of more youth group resources designed specifically for use with the Junior High age. According to the Youth Office, the Local Youth Group Handbook, currently under revision, will have a section specifically dedicated to ministry with Junior High youth. Additionally, it is the Youth Office's intention that all aspects of programming in the handbook will be applicable to the Junior High age range.

Post High

To address the needs of youth who are aging out of YRUU, the Youth Office has published, as mentioned above, a pamphlet entitled "The Post High School Survival Kit". Currently, this pamphlet is being updated. Institutionally, the next step for a young person in UUism is the UU Young Adult Network (UUYAN), formed in the mid-80s to address needs of UUs between the ages of 18 and 35. However, recently there has been discussion on the YRUU-L online mailing list that many former YRUUers in the college age range (18-22) do not feel they have enough in common with the 25- to 30-year-olds to feel comfortable in UUYAN programs. Campus ministries, which have experienced tremendous growth in recent years, is one answer to this problem. But it is important not to assume that this meets the needs of all 18- to 22-year-old UU young adults. Non-campus young adult programs need to be reviewed for their inclusiveness of the 18- to 22-year-old age range. The current revision of "The Post High School Survival Kit" would benefit from consultation with the continental UUYAN and the Young Adult Ministries Office to add the perspective of people who have made the transition.

Since the last review there has been some increase in the amount of curricula available for youth. However, to ask what youth-oriented curricula are available from the UUA is different from asking what youth-oriented curricula are currently in use by UU congregations since some congregations may be using out-of-print curricula (1) (see Appendix F for curriculum notes). Therefore, it is important to note that this review primarily considers available and anticipated curricula, rather than materials which have been in use.

Curriculum Mapping is one place to begin when looking for curricula. The UUA Bookstore Catalog (2) describes the 1996 edition of Curriculum Mapping, A Guide to Unitarian Universalist Curricula as "a directory of the most effective and widely used UU curricula currently available." Curriculum Mapping lists six Junior High curricula (3), four Senior High curricula (4), three Multi-Age Resources with some relevance to youth (5), and one curriculum (6) under Elementary Resources "easily adapted for high school and intergenerational use." Each curriculum's strengths and weaknesses are reviewed. REACH (Religious Education Action Clearing House), "A packet of resources for lifespan RE programs" published twice a year and sent free to every UU congregation, should be consulted to obtain up-to-date information about new curricula.(7)

Religious Education Curriculum Resources

Senior High Curricula

We wish to challenge two apparent operating assumptions of the UUA Religious Education Department: 1) that curricula should be created in thematic, multi-session packages after lengthy development and field testing; and 2) that there is no demand for new senior high curricula.

The latter assumption is the result of a philosophical emphasis from the Religious Education Department on developing youth leadership and YRUU programs, as well as a widely held perception that congregations have also shifted emphasis from religious education classes to YRUU programs. We have found that some are trying to run both classes and youth groups, and a few have only classes. One of the five components of balanced programming for youth groups is learning. While we acknowledge that learning can also happen experientially, it is important that we not lose sight of the need some congregations have expressed for guided learning resources.

Half-year and year-long theme-based curriculum packages are appropriate for children's religious education. Youth, on the other hand, like adults, need to be given the opportunity to be flexible, exercise some options and even direct for themselves their mode of learning. One way to afford youth some degree of control of their learning process is to develop an alternative curriculum model which focuses on short-term four- to six-week mini-courses and single session workshops. Such short-format, workshop-like curriculum units can be made adaptable for use either in local youth groups or at weekend and week-long youth conferences. In keeping with our philosophy of youth empowerment, consideration must also be given to designing these curricula so that they can be facilitated by either youth or adults. For youth who have come into our religious movement at high school age, there is a particular need for a short-format curriculum which introduces Unitarian Universalist principles and traditions.

One advantage in the development of short-format curricula is that it can be done more quickly than the standard multi-session packages that are developed over a period of years and include extensive field testing. However, another advantage is the vast resource of youth-led, short-format workshop materials that exists in the youth themselves. There are a number of standard conference workshops that have been passed in grass-roots fashion from conference to conference by youth leadership across the continent. A set of guidelines on how to develop and publish workshop curricula would facilitate the youth in fully utilizing the wisdom and creativity they already bring to their own programming. With the proliferation of desktop publishing, curricula can easily be published by youth and distributed on-line to other groups and districts. From time to time, these grass-roots generated materials can be collected by the Youth Office for more formal publication.

Life Issues for Teens (LIFT), a 20-session theme-based package dealing with interpersonal communication, relationships, life crises and transitions, is the only curriculum described in the current Local Youth Group Program Handbook. Published in 1985, by now LIFT is dated and lacks an approach which reflects our UU philosophy of youth empowerment. While the life issues this curriculum deals with are still relevant to teens, these topics might be better served in a different curriculum model.

Junior High Curricula

The About Your Sexuality (AYS) curriculum is the most significant youth curriculum developed by the UUA and used in our congregations. In addition to being a human sexuality education program, AYS is designed to develop group bonding and communication skills. Therefore, AYS at the junior high level plays a critical role in relation to high school-aged youth programs, as many AYS groups go on to become the nucleus of the local youth group.

Originally published in the early 1970s, About Your Sexuality was most recently revised in 1983, with an AIDS supplement added in 1985. For some years, it has been widely felt that a new approach was needed to the subject of human sexuality. As a result at the time of this report, a highly anticipated curriculum, Our Whole Lives (OWL), is being developed. This is planned to be a life-span curriculum with units for children, youth and adults. The junior high component of OWL is currently being field tested in 40 sites and, if successful, will be available within a year or so. A senior high component is also being developed which will be field tested beginning September, 1997. A former YRUU Programs Specialist has been hired as Sex Education Outreach Coordinator for the OWL Project to help develop an advocacy manual which will promote comprehensive sex education to other denominations and secular organizations.

Neighboring Faiths, the new version of the fondly remembered Church Across the Street, takes a broader approach than the original. In view of the fact that World Religions: A Year's Curriculum for Junior Youth, which up until now has been the most recent curriculum on the subject, is no longer available, the new program has been eagerly anticipated.

While there are more curricula available on the junior high level than on the senior high level, new resources are needed which will help our junior high youth develop leadership skills, an understanding of and appreciation for their own UU traditions and sources, and their own spirituality. Our UU philosophy of youth empowerment can also be introduced in junior high curricula.

Recognizing that the transition into adolescence can be the most significant in a person's life, in recent years a growing number of UU congregations have offered a Coming of Age program to their 7th and 8th grade youth. These programs are designed to help young people develop a strong sense of self-worth, a meaningful set of values, and explore their identity as UUs within the context of a demanding and complex society. While there is no UUA-published resource for Coming of Age programs, a collection of congregationally developed materials is available from the Youth Office. It has been the philosophy of the Religious Education Department that Coming of Age programs work best when the local congregation is invested in developing or adapting their own program to reflect local concerns, resources and opportunities.

This philosophy does not exclude the possibility that a guidebook or adaptable model curriculum may be a welcomed resource in many congregations trying to launch such a program for the first time. Youth Council 1996 addressed the need for a model program and work is progressing toward its development. The tendency among local congregations has been to emphasize the transition from church school into congregational membership, which does not address the transitional process into YRUU. We hope that Youth Council's initiative will lead to a richer experience for junior high youth and help them stay involved with our religious communities until they are old enough to join YRUU.

Curricula for Isolated Youth

Other than the scouting-oriented Religion in Life booklets, there are no self-study curricula available for youth from congregations with no youth programming. While curricula alone will not resolve the problem of isolation, current technology provides an opportunity to offer curricula to isolated youth. Weekly on-line "classes" or "chats" could fill the need for exploration of Unitarian Universalism, UU approaches to spirituality, as well as ethical, social and other issues. Toward this end, *On The Path*, a curriculum on spirituality, is already in the process of being made available on line.

Recommendations

- **Recommendation:** That the Youth Programs Director establish a schedule for reviewing and updating the published resources of the Youth Office.
- **Recommendation:** That Steering Committee examine the Synapse distribution systems and mailing list, and consider new funding sources for an additional issue if desired.
- **Recommendation:** That Steering Committee serve as the editorial board for Synapse for the purpose of advising the editors on questions of appropriateness of specific content items.
- **Recommendation:** That the Youth Office consider putting the Youth Advisors' Handbook and other publications and resources on-line.
- **Recommendation:** That Continental UUYAN and Young Adult Ministries be consulted in the revision of the "Post High School Survival Kit" to add the perspective of people who have made the transition.
- **Recommendation:** That the Religious Education Department create, as well as invite the creation of, short-format (up to six sessions) curriculum modules for youth which may be youth led; that one such module specifically provide a model for developing short-format youth-led curricula.

Findings Part IV: Distribution of this Report

In view of our findings on the essential need for adult involvement in youth programming, we urge the UUA Board to make this report widely available throughout our association.

Future Reviews

Our investigations into the recent history of UU youth movements reveals a pattern of roughly 15-year cycles in our youth organizations. Liberal Religious Youth was formed in 1953, then hit its peak in 1968-69, but met its demise in 1983. YRUU came into being in 1983 and reached a high point last year with the Youth Focus at the 1996 General Assembly, creating a momentum that we hope our report is well-timed to build on. In view of past patterns, we feel it would be prudent for future youth programming reviews to occur every seven to eight years to provide a sort of mid-cycle correction.

District Youth Programming Reviews

As a continentally appointed committee with limited resources, we were not able to give as much attention to the district and local levels as we would have liked. We also feel, however, that in many ways it is more appropriate for this level of evaluation to be undertaken by the individual districts. We therefore urge district boards to appoint their own Youth Programs Review Committees, comprised of youth and adults, to address the wide variation of youth programming quality and quantity that we have observed throughout the association. We call on these district review committees to thoroughly evaluate the level of youth leadership in the district, the degree of adult involvement, the adequacy of financial resources allocated by the district, the effectiveness of the district youth governing body, the level of youth representation on the district board, district committees and congregation boards, the needs of local congregations for launching or maintaining their youth group, the quality of youth offerings at camps, conferences and seminaries, and, most importantly, district level support and training of youth advisors.

If every district in our association were to fulfill this charge and act on its results, the Unitarian Universalist religious movement would be capable of developing a thorough and consistent youth ministry, grounded in love and respect, which before long could find itself unequaled among liberal religious movements.

Recommendations

- **Recommendation:** That the UUA Board make the 1997 Youth Programs Review Committee report readily available to all parties who are named in its recommendations, in addition to UUA staff, including YRUU Youth Council, YRUU Steering Committee, district youth governing bodies, district presidents, district executives, UUA field staff, district religious education committees, the UU Ministers Association, the Liberal Religious Educators Association, the Starr King and Meadville-Lombard UU seminaries, the Young Adult Ministries Office, the Continental UU Young Adult Network, the General Assembly Planning Committee and, not least, youth and youth advisors; that the publication of this report be announced on UU-related on-line mailing lists with information on its availability; and that this report be distributed through UU web sites.
- **Recommendation:** That the UUA Board appoint future continental youth programs review committees every seven to eight years.
- **Recommendation:** That district boards appoint their own Youth Programs Review Committees, comprised of youth and adults, to evaluate and give recommendations on all aspects of the quality and quantity of youth programming within their district.

Findings Part V: Summary of Recommendations

To The UUA Board Of Trustees:

Recommendation: That the UUA Board of Trustees recognize YRUU as a “sponsored organization” and that YRUU be represented in the UUA Directory as such.

Recommendation: That the UUA Board of Trustees place the LRY endowment income, currently integrated in the Youth Office budget, under the direct control of YRUU with the understanding that that amount will be replaced in the youth program budget from General Fund monies; that the Steering Committee of YRUU be the executors of the LRY endowment income at the will of the Youth Council.

Recommendation: That individual members of the UUA Board of Trustees take a mentoring interest in the Youth Council Representative(s) from their district(s) in order to help nurture the leadership skills required to be an effective district representative.

Recommendation: That the UUA Board of Trustees establish a task force to examine and make recommendations on youth advisor training and support for the purpose of reinforcing adult involvement in youth programming (especially on the local level); that this task force consider: advisor training (especially in regard to fostering youth leadership, adolescent development, healthy personal boundaries, and junior high advising), the development of clinical pastoral consultancy and the creation of an advisor networking and advocacy organization.

Recommendation: That the UUA Board of Trustees make the 1997 Youth Programs Review Committee report readily available to all parties who are named in its recommendations, in addition to UUA staff, including YRUU Youth Council, YRUU Steering Committee, district youth governing bodies, district presidents, district executives, UUA field staff, district religious education committees, the UU Ministers Association, the Liberal Religious Educators Association, the Starr King and Meadville-Lombard UU seminaries, the Young Adult Ministries Office, the Continental UU Young Adult Network, the General Assembly Planning Committee and, not least, youth and youth advisors; that the publication of this report be announced on UU-related on-line mailing lists with information on its availability; and that this report be distributed through UU web sites.

Recommendation: That the UUA Board of Trustees appoint future continental youth programs review committees every seven to eight years.

To The YRUU Youth Council:

Recommendation: That Youth Council review the current Youth Council Representative job description and explore ways to hold Youth Council Representatives accountable for the dissemination of information to their district.

Recommendation: That the UUA Board of Trustees place the LRY endowment income, currently integrated in the Youth Office budget, under the direct control of YRUU and that the Steering Committee of YRUU be the executors of that money at the will of the Youth Council.

To The YRUU Steering Committee:

Recommendation: That the UUA Board of Trustees place the LRY endowment income, currently integrated in the Youth Office budget, under the direct control of YRUU and that the Steering Committee of YRUU be the executors of that money at the will of the Youth Council.

Recommendation: That the Steering Committee, with input from the Youth Office, create an updated job description for the position of YRUU Programs Specialist.

Recommendation: That the Steering Committee, the Youth Programs Director and the Director of the Department of Religious Education together establish formal evaluation processes, including: an exit interview between the YRUU Programs Specialist and the Religious Education Director; an opportunity at the last Steering Committee meeting prior to their departure, for each YPS to give an evaluation of their experience; and an opportunity for Steering Committee to have input into the annual employee evaluation of the Youth Programs Director.

Recommendation: That Steering Committee consider implementing specific role differentiations among members, such as someone to set each meeting's agenda, someone to convene the meeting, etc.

Recommendation: That the Steering Committee include in Continental Conference programming each year an opportunity for formal leadership training.

Recommendation: That the General Assembly Planning Committee, the Youth Office, the Steering Committee and the Youth Caucus Business Manager cooperate in a task force to address youth participation and activities at General Assembly.

Recommendation: That Steering Committee examine the Synapse distribution systems and mailing list, and consider new funding sources for an additional issue if desired.

Recommendation: That Steering Committee serve as the editorial board for Synapse for the purpose of advising the editors on questions of appropriateness of specific content items.

To The Youth Office:

Recommendation: That the Steering Committee, the Youth Programs Director and the Director of the Department of Religious Education together establish formal evaluation processes, including: an exit interview between the YRUU Programs Specialist and the Religious Education Director; an opportunity at the last Steering Committee meeting prior to their departure, for each YPS to give an evaluation of their experience; and an opportunity for Steering Committee to have input into the annual employee evaluation of the Youth Programs Director.

Recommendation: That the General Assembly Planning Committee, the Youth Office, the Steering Committee and the Youth Caucus Business Manager cooperate in a task force to address youth participation and activities at General Assembly.

Recommendation: That each district board encourage its local congregations to provide their youth advisors with a designated resource person for clinical/pastoral consultation; that the Youth Office and Department of Religious Education include this recommendation in advisor training and Ministry With Youth curriculum.

Recommendation: That the Youth Programs Director establish a schedule for reviewing and updating the published resources of the Youth Office.

Recommendation: That the Youth Office consider putting the Youth Advisors' Handbook and other publications and resources online.

To District Youth Governing Bodies:

Recommendation: That district youth governing bodies (Youth Adult Committees, District Youth Committees, etc.) also explore ways to hold their Youth Council Representatives accountable for the dissemination of the continental-level decisions and information throughout the districts.

To The Director Of The Religious Education Department:

Recommendation: That the Steering Committee, the Youth Programs Director and the Director of the Religious Education Department together establish formal evaluation processes, including: an exit interview between the YRUU Programs Specialist and the Director of the Religious Education Department; an opportunity at the last Steering Committee meeting prior to their departure, for each YPS to give an evaluation of their experience; and an opportunity for Steering Committee to have input into the annual employee evaluation of the Youth Programs Director.

Recommendation: That each district board encourage its local congregations to provide their youth advisors with a designated resource person for clinical/pastoral consultation; that the Youth Office and Department of Religious Education include this recommendation in advisor training and Ministry With Youth curriculum.

Recommendation: That the Religious Education Department create, as well as invite the creation of, short-format (up to six sessions) curriculum modules for youth which may be youth led; that one such module specifically provide a model for developing short-format youth-led curricula.

To The District Boards:

Recommendation: That each district board encourage its local congregations to provide their youth advisors with a designated resource person for clinical/pastoral consultation; that the Youth Office and Department of Religious Education include this recommendation in advisor training and Ministry With Youth curriculum.

Recommendation: That each district board make a thorough review of its mechanism for supporting youth advisors.

Recommendation: That district boards appoint their own youth programs review committees to evaluate and give recommendations on all aspects of the quality and quantity of youth programming within their district.

To The GA Planning Committee And Youth Caucus Business Manager:

Recommendation: That the General Assembly Planning Committee, the Youth Office, the Steering Committee and the Youth Caucus Business Manager cooperate in a task force to address youth participation and activities at General Assembly.

To UU-Related Seminaries, The Dept. Of Ministry And The UU Ministers Association:

Recommendation: That the Ministry With Youth Renaissance Module (which is geared towards religious educators and ministers) be offered at UU-related seminaries, be commended to the Department of Ministry and the UU Ministers Association for continuing education, and be considered for inclusion into the Extension Ministry training.

To Continental UUYAN And Young Adult Ministries:

Recommendation: That Continental UUYAN and Young Adult Ministries be consulted in the revision of the "Post High School Survival Kit" to add the perspective of people who have made the transition.

Appendix A: Testimony From Youth

When asked on our questionnaire “How has YRUU affected your life or that of someone you know?” youth had these things to say:

“I’ve met some amazing friends and learned a lot about myself at conferences, retreats and GA. The value of the experiences I’ve had is indescribable.”

“I’ve made incredible friends, and I’ve really come to value my life as lived (or attempted to live) by the UU principles and purposes.”

“Amazing spiritual realization, I have been able to get completely rejuvenated by attending YRUU events. I know people who have been saved at the cons.”

“YRUU is my glue, my putty, it simply has made my life as a UU complete. Since I have joined YAC, the leader in me has come out and grown so much which has helped me more than I can say in this scary thing I call my life.”

“The guidelines of UUism have changed my way of thinking and looking at things, in that it’s taught me to be more open and accepting of others. YRUU has shown me that there are many people who have been affected the same way.”

“YRUU conferences have helped me to express my individuality. The Leadership Development Conference built my confidence.”

“YRUU has greatly affected my life. I think I would be a very different person if I wasn’t in youth group.”

“It has given me a more positive outlook in general. The people I have met give me hope and comfort.”

“I’ve met amazing people and learned something about community.”

“It has given focus and responsibility. It takes up a lot of my weekends, but is very enriching. Good Stuff!”

“YRUU has made my life really complete. Given me some more stability.”

“Yes, definitely. It gave me and other youth the opportunity to develop leadership skills and do things for ourselves.”

“AYS is great! Cons are great!”

Appendix B: Testimony From Youth Advisors

The following are some answers advisors gave to a series of questions posted on the ADVISOR-L on-line mailing list concerning support from their congregations and their personal philosophy of UU youth programming:

From the west coast: “I gather that the Youth Office and continental YRUU have one philosophy, and congregations largely have another. The continental level works from a paradigm of abundance. Youth have an institutional culture of effective youth leadership grounded in spiritual practice, supported and empowered by dedicated adults. The congregational level often works from a paradigm of scarcity, with staff viewing youth programming as a tedious extra tacked onto their job. Many advisors work without substantial support from the congregation and without awareness of denominational resources. I suspect that many successful congregational youth programs still consider themselves peripheral to the congregation and that the congregation stays more aware of, and takes more pride in, its pulpit ministry, its social action, its children’s RE, its UUSC and UUWF and Interweave chapters. How many congregations consider their ministry with youth as one of their finest achievements?”

From the Mid-west: “I am somewhat fearful of to whom I can be speaking, since there appear to be so many opinionated adults who have yet to fully attend a YAC event, yet are more than willing to share their skewed and frequently inaccurate viewpoints. YAC has had to respond to several letters (that were not even sent directly to YAC) full of nonsense and false statements. It’s hard to trust. I wish there were more adults—ministers and DREs—involved in our district activities, so that there were a larger pool of persons who were aware of the ongoing process. Sometimes I feel like I am the only youth advocate around.”

From the West Coast: “We have just two advisors, both of us very dedicated to improving our youth program. It has grown and become recognized as an important aspect of our lifespan education programming. Our part-time DRE until this year had no involvement in our program except in letting us know what info got mailed to her that might be of interest to us. This year, we had a mini-crisis when we tried to enlist more volunteer help and got a very enthusiastic volunteer who had some emotional maturity problems. We all handled it well, coming together quickly. Our most excellent interim minister helped smooth relations before real crisis occurred. The DRE decided, even though she had little time to spare and acknowledging our autonomy in programming, that it was in everyone’s interest for her to be more aware of what’s going on with us. We agreed. We have started trying to meet on a monthly basis for communication and general support. It has been useful.”

From the Mid-west: “Adult advisors need support in learning how to support youth without actually doing the things that youth can do for themselves. I would like to receive materials from the district that acknowledge me as a current youth advisor; support me in the “Big Picture” of what I am committed to providing for youth; inform me of conferences, meetings and other resources available to me; and provide me with an avenue for communication and feedback at the district level.”

From the East Coast: “In so many districts, advisors are asked to make a tremendous investment of their time and deepest selves with little support, acknowledgement or compensation—taking risks to build a vision of youth ministry not owned by their congregations, or supported passively, not actively. Youth are best served when ‘empowerment’ comes from the larger congregation, not just from individual advisors.”

From the Northeast: “I would say at our church and in much of our district the programming philosophy is: safety, validation, empowerment, delight, community, and love. We provide a network of caring adults committed to the physical and emotional safety of all our youth. We provide activities and programs that serve to empower and validate their feelings of accomplishment and self-worth. We provide experiences that delight and create a sense of personal availability to the world at-large. We strive to continually build our relationships with each other from small groups, to large, to the community around us, to the world. We generously give and abundantly receive love.”

Appendix C: A Homily And Two Sermons Preached At General Assembly 1996

Homily

by **Karina Kramer-Schevers**

The following homilies were delivered on June 22, 1996 at the GA 1996 Worship Service, "The Future is Now", as part of the 1996 GA Youth Focus.

When I was nine years old, my parents took me to a toaster-shaped concrete building that had teal slit windows, like jewel tone eels, on the larger walls and floor-to-ceiling glass as the other two. Hanging down like the hem of a great mother's skirt were earth-colored banners, and in back of the podium hung an art piece of stretched wool that looked like pale distant mountains. The building was not ugly, it was distinctly unusual. "This is a church?" I asked my mom.

About a year later, I remember having a pep talk with God. I don't remember the problem, but I hurried to the secret hang-out next to my house, behind the big climbing pine, and pressed my dirtied child palms on the brick wall and had a fairly rational one-on-one with what I thought was God; somebody who could see the whole thing and was, of course, on my side. Very soon after that I gave up the idea of God. I think I had wanted the feeling of comfort and understanding that others seem to possess when they said they believe in God, but already I was questioning the system, seeing blind followers come up short of satisfying answers, and begging to swim upstream. I was eccentric and creative, and whether it was painful and lonely at times or not, I was an individual.

In fifth grade when I expressed my views on God, I was called a Satan worshiper on the school steps. I turned to the little punk that called me that and said, "NO, I'm a Unitarian." Yet it was because my parents made me that I attended Sunday School. Church wasn't cool. The cool kids didn't like Sunday School. Why did I have to go to school on the weekends? But secretly, hidden deep in my consciousness, like pennies lost in the sofa cushion cracks, I liked Sunday School, or at least began to, because when my church mentor asked me if AYS was any better, I almost slipped and told him I kind of liked it. My feeling about church became a mild love-hate relationship. I enjoyed most of the stuff we were doing, but it didn't seem like I should like it. I loved the Boston Bound trip, but I didn't want to tell people at school who I had gone with. At least in my head, I was a hip kid, I wasn't a Kum-ba-ya singin', prim and proper church girl. And though I knew that I was a Unitarian Universalist, I didn't know what that meant.

My Sunday School class was the first Coming of Age group at the Unitarian Church of Evanston. I admit, we had little idea of what an honor this is; being educated and asked to define our UU beliefs through our actions, then being welcomed into the congregation as voting members. There was a packet listing requirements, offering choices on how to complete the needed work. One of the choices was Spin YRUU conference at the North Shore Church in Deerfield. What I distinctly remember about the conference is the sting of vinegar from the cuts on my hands when I set the color of my tie-dyed shirt, being little and girlishly skinny, playing wink and almost losing my elastic-waist pants, laying down on the chapel floor to create a human peace sign. It was an experience full of energy and pulse, drastic highs and lows, honesty and intensity, hugging with my entire body, smiling with my whole face.

I was immediately addicted to YRUU. I spent my high school years growing up and coming out of myself and into the world with the support and guidance of YRUU. A conference was a brilliant shining weekend like an eclipse, anxiously anticipated, full of meaning, too bright to stare directly at the significance of what was happening at the time, and recalled and replayed long after. Every conference burned an after image of compassion and friendship, love and community into the backs of my eyes until I wanted to be someone who maintained and assisted the rituals. I worked to become a leader in my youth group and I ran for YAC. I was the District Newsletter Editor for two years and the YAC Vice President for a year. I also served as the Youth Representative of the Religious Education Board for my church for four years. It was a blessed endless circle; when I established myself as a leader, I gave back to the community. When I worked to better YRUU, I felt better about myself.

When my time in the Central Midwest District ended, I wasn't finished with YRUU. I traveled to my second Con Con and located the nearest church to the college I now attend.

When I showed up at the Fourth Universalist Society in Manhattan, I was like a wet paper towel about to shred and disintegrate. Having lived in New York City for only two weeks, I was already lonely and impatient for good friendships to form. After the first service, I found someone who would begin a college age group with me. I really needed my UU fix.

But what does it all mean? Have I learned what a Unitarian Universalist is? What do I get out of this now that I rarely get to conferences? Somewhere along the way I figured out that I feel so wonderfully comfortable being with Unitarian Universalists

because we have the same morals, and though our spirituality may differ, we can respect and learn from each other. I discovered that the God I spoke to as a child was me, that I was calling my darkness within to help me help myself, that I believe the Great Spirit, the Directions, the Goddess is within every person, but also that someone who does believe in God still has my respect, prayers, and blessings.

Unitarian Universalism is accepting people as they are, giving basic respect to all beings, and being able to consider others' beliefs to broaden perspective. It is strengthening the individual in order that many empowered individuals can form a loving and compassionate community. What I received from Sunday School and YRUU was courage to break my pin feathers in order that they could strengthen, so I could fly higher, viewing through the eyes of an eagle, striving to act in wisdom and beauty, learning to see what is essential and what will give me worry for nothing, setting my priorities morally, realizing that people are the most important thing and that we are all related, learning to be able to soar into myself in clear introspection, to be able to heal myself, to love myself, and to carry in my cradling claws, like the newly-birthing sun being set in the heavens, my dark glinting splinter of spirituality.

Blessed be.

Unreasonable Strength

by Rachel L. Cole

The following is an excerpt of a sermon delivered on June 21, 1996 at General Assembly as the youth winner of the "Youth Focus Sermon Contest."

... I remember several low points, when I felt oppressed by my seemingly hopeless surroundings, and it became difficult to effectively serve the Saint Francis Inn's guests. I knew that this despair came to others on the staff at times, but their methods for dealing with this depression, like so many of their daily experiences, were closely related to their faith in ways I did not feel I could imitate. To lessen the pain of seeing the disease of our neighborhood, my friends at least had some kind of formula to follow: say this prayer, go to confession, do ten rosaries, think of the glorious life that is sure to come eventually.

I felt almost jealous of these traditions in which my community sought comfort, for even if their prayers did not visibly change the problems surrounding us, they had a plan, something to do. They had each taken a great leap to believe in their faith, and in doing so, seemed to have received some kind of grace that I did not understand, a grace which allowed them to depend upon the unprovable. The power of their faith allowed them to continue living despite despair. In fact, not only did they live, but they worked for their idealistic and impractical principles, the kind that often seem only believable in a discussion group's setting because of the scarcity of encouragement and validation you get from daily life.

While I did not wish to be zapped into a Catholic overnight, the trust I saw in them was enviable. Not only did they have their trust in what they believed, but they also had each other, living testaments to lives through a common faith. I felt helpless, and horribly alone. But I did not go home and give up. How could I? That would not change my hopelessness, and it certainly wouldn't change the lives of the people of Kensington. Instead, I looked in the phone book, took the next Sunday off, and went to the local UU church, the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia.

I was greeted by familiar sights, but ones very different from those at the Inn. A small summer-service was taking place in the only air-conditioned room just like they do at my church, and it was being led by a member of the Worship Committee, a black woman who had never been to a seminary. There were candles and a chalice on a table in the front, a wide array of different kinds of people in the congregation, and Sweet Honey in the Rock was playing in the background. The woman's sermon was on "The Dignity of Choice", in reference to the issue of abortion. Very, very different from the Catholics.

Afterwards, as I walked through the city's public parks with a wide smile on my face and a feeling of peace within me, I had to wonder what exactly it was about that service that had restored my equilibrium, giving me back my generally positive outlook in life. I compared what I had experienced at the UU church to my daily life at the Inn and tried to find the secret ingredient that had centered me so well. After considering all the usual explanations for the magic I had felt, I was left unsatisfied. Community and love were no more or less apparent at the Inn than at any UU function I've ever attended. The UUs I met could hardly be called more or less committed to their ideals than my Franciscan friends, and, though this may shock you, it wasn't the usual UU value system that I missed, for I had even found several feminist, pro-choice, gay-rights-touting pinkos among the Catholics.

So what was it? Why was I so definitely a UU from birth despite my parents' attempts at sending me to religious education classes in other faiths? If I looked at the experience purely logically, the seemingly bland set of values had given me unreasonable strength. Why this, apart from every other support in my life? My realization was this—that our faith, in its ability to give us mystical strength, is not different from any other faith; that it has power to inspire us and to support us and to connect us; that we have Principles whose

sentiments we all hold dear, and by which we all try to lead our lives; that these shared Principles contain all the power we can tap from them, much like the power of a group of people standing together to sing one song, as we shall soon do today.

I believe that the qualities in our Principles that I once called blandness and pure rationality are misleading, and that we have to realize this to tap the power of our faith. In truth, it is incredible that each of us have pledged to affirm and promote the worth and dignity in every person when there are so many people who make you want to write them off. In truth, it is no more logical to say that each of us should be trusted with our own search for truth and meaning, as we do, than to say that each of us is pre -destined to heaven or hell, as the Calvinism from which many of us fled dictates. Neither statement can be proved, but both greatly affect the lives of those who believe them. . . .

For these acts of faith, I thank you. Not only have you changed the world, but you have shown me that it is possible for me to do so. This is the strength of UUism. The leap of faith that one UU takes in espousing what are truly amazing and illogical Principles not only gives him or her power to action, but gives the rest of us the courage needed to live out our ideals in the same way.

Miracles?

by Drake Baer

The following sermon was delivered on January 25, 1996 at the Unitarian Church of Princeton, NJ, and on June 21, 1996 at General Assembly as the advisor winner of the “Youth Focus Sermon Contest.”

I'd like the adults who are here this morning to take a moment to reconnect to your adolescence. Close your eyes and remember who you were as a teenager, what you looked like, where you lived. Your parents. Who were your friends? How did you feel about them, and how sure were you that they liked you? Did you like yourself? Remember an especially embarrassing moment. Remember a moment of great victory. How did you express it? Did you have problems with authority? What was your faith journey like? If you thought about it, what was God like for you?

When I was 15 and facing a life that seemed more horrible than I had the courage or resources to bear, I needed a miracle. Unfortunately, I didn't know any Unitarian Universalists, and all I knew about them was that they didn't believe in anything. But there were plenty of born-again Christians running around offering salvation. Yes. Salvation. The salvation they offered me was real, not shallow or contrived. When I asked the Holy Spirit to come into my life, the visceral feeling of something more powerful than I had imagined pouring down my spine was probably like what the Hindus call “shakti pa,” which is their equivalent to baptism in the Holy Spirit, or what some shrinks call a gestalt, which is theirs.

The next year-and-a-half of my life was magical. When I returned to school after the summer of my transformation, some of my friends didn't recognize me at first. Living in the presence of love that I absolutely believed in brought true miracles into my life almost every day. Most of the time, I could clearly distinguish between my subtly destructive impulses and that part of intuition which translates the voice of God.

Of course, it's after your big miracle that the real work begins, and I worked hard, though everything was much easier than before: building community with people who accepted me, finding courage, developing integrity, building an original, self-sustaining inner life.

At 34, I know I found the best part of my soul at the age of 15, through a subversive act of faith in a community that believed in transformation. My faith was subversive: it separated me from the expectations and even the values of my non-believing parents, and it allowed me to penetrate, for the first time, the membrane of defenses that kept me from fully engaging others with my truest inner self.

But, the community that made my miracle possible had hooks. It required faith in a story of literal resurrection and magic words that eventually tore through my sense of intellectual integrity, making me question the validity of my most essential truths in dark moments that grew in frequency and intensity as time went on. Our concept of God was encapsulated in the word “Love,” which was true for me. And though my community would never admit it, our concept of Satan seemed encapsulated in the word, “Why,” which did not ring true.

I remember the queasy feeling in my gut when I read the story of creation a second time, this time noticing that the damning apple Satan offered Eve, the apple which drove us from the Garden of Eden and made all of us sinners from birth in need of salvation, came from the tree of knowledge.

I suppose that any community offering miracles also has compromising hooks. Perhaps that's why the wise have long counseled, "If you meet the Buddha in the road, kill him." But, I was as devout as anyone I knew. I read the Bible cover-to-cover during that year-and-a-half, and I prayed to God every night, even during those dark times, to save me from the devil's intellectual seductions.

I'll never forget the moment when the devil won. When I finally chose to face the fact that the miracle which made me whole carried hooks that threatened to destroy me, I called my minister, to whom I was very close, and explained that I was no longer a born-again Christian. That I was not back-sliding, but sliding forward and away. He came over to my house, we talked intensely. He cried. And he finally said, "You know that if you were suddenly in an accident and knew you had two seconds to live, you would ask Christ's forgiveness rather than risk eternity in hell" I had to say to this man and this community that had loved me as I needed to be loved: No, I would not.

If living in hell is the price to pay for truthfulness, I'm willing to pay. And I did, for awhile

The tornado swept into our lives at the beginning of last year. I called him that because, at 15 he seemed to sweep up everything in his path into a creative chaos that often left some wreckage behind. Youth group had come into its own the year before and was a powerful place in the lives of many of our youth when he came along. Our youth really got the mutual respect thing, truly accepted each other in unself-conscious ways, and we had a nearly 100% attendance rate on Sunday mornings and at overnights.

Like everyone in our group, the tornado brought his own yin and yang with him, both of which were unusually powerful. Opening circles were constantly interrupted by his smart-alecky comments and frequently disrespectful attitude, which made our space less safe for some people. His consistent openness, commitment, and originality made a wonderful imprint on our community but, frankly, he was a major pain in the ass. For good reason. Among his other problems, his father had died a year-and-a-half before, and he had been unable to cry even once since before it happened. He was on his fourth psychiatrist since then, whom, like the others, he didn't trust or connect with. And every phone call I took from him at home, including those at 2:00 in the morning when he was struggling with despair, no matter how poignant and meaningful those discussions were, ended with, "You're ugly." Click. That's how he ended every call.

I was hesitant about taking him along with us to his first district conference last year, in Connecticut. Many of our youth make themselves vulnerable at those conferences in a way that requires a lot from attendees: mutual respect, openness, a willingness to respect the guidelines. Several of our youth went over the importance of mutual respect with the tornado prior to the conference and explained that the youth running it took the guidelines seriously and would send him home early if he broke the rules. And so, reluctantly and worriedly, I brought him with us.

People are rounded up for various activities at these cons by someone banging a big gong, and I heard the tornado complaining about this "obnoxious" gong Friday night. Sure enough, Saturday morning, the gong was missing. I was furious, and ran off to find him. There, in the main gathering area, was the tornado, clapping rhythmically, as others joined him to form a circle which grew with centrifugal force. As people gathered, the tornado went into the circle, danced around, did some acrobatics, invited other people into the circle to express themselves, which they did, and that is how we have gathered people at our cons ever since. The tornado managed to offend some people that Saturday but he really started to get it, what being part of a loving community requires.

Saturday night's worship was amazing. Like all of the most powerful worship services I've experienced, this was developed and run by a YRUUer. After chanting a song and filing into the chapel with candles, we had a Quaker sharing circle. The tornado shared that he learned that weekend that no one is ugly, by which of course he meant he learned that he wasn't ugly. He shared profoundly for a couple of minutes and ended by saying, ". . . And I'm doing something I haven't done in a long time. I'm crying." All the hours we had spent with the tornado making it safe to just cry, and the thousands of dollars his mom had spent on psychiatrists had been unsuccessful because the tornado needed more than a good shrink or a mentor/friend who would share his journey for awhile. What the tornado needed was a miracle.

And our liberal religious institution, so comfortable with the gods of ambiguity, gave the tornado that miracle.

The next part of the worship was Sufi dancing, in which people pair up holding up their hands against the others and moving in a circle around each other while singing, "All I ask of you is forever to remember me as loving you All I ask of you is forever to remember me as loving you" Then each person spins off singing the Sufi words in Arabic, and on to the next person. I saw youth after youth, representing all the normally segregated cliques one finds in a high school, from artsy types to macho jocks, holding the tornado, many of them crying with him. He cried for hours.

The hard part starts after your miracle. But it's been a good kind of difficult for Brian these past months. The first full marking period after his miracle, he was taken off academic probation for the first time in two years. At the Princeton con, during an advisor meeting, some advisors were talking about how caring the Princeton youth are for each other, especially that kid with the crazy hair, who had

ministered so well and so consistently to youth he didn't even know when they seemed alienated or out of sorts. These advisors couldn't believe it when I said that six months before he was so disruptive.

I mentioned Brian's name because when I asked him if I could use his story anonymously, he asked that I identify him to you. Because Brian is not just a member of YRUU. He's a member of our church community who has the courage to contribute to our vitality by being open about who he really is.

In some ways, adults of the religious right understand youth and the miraculous better than we of the religious left. One of the things they understand is that miracles require courage and a tolerance of risk on the part of everyone they touch.

Let me offer you a simple formula: where X represents vital youth ministry and Y represents potential problems, X equals Y. But religious conservatives also understand that miracles offer everyone in the community a reminder of what is best about the principles and faith behind the community.

Not many places in society sanction the miraculous. And with every generation of youth, the need for the miraculous seems to increase. Fundamentalist religion and cults understand this. So do drug dealers. As a result, both groups are doing well with youth these days. When will we understand it? And how do we, as a religion rooted in principles rather than creeds and other magic words, countenance it?

Our youth group attended Utne Reader's Vision Fest last year, in which 40 people identified by the magazine as "visionaries of the emerging culture" answered the question, "Where Do You See the Darkness and Where Do You See the Light?" Each of the panelists, ranging from Maya Angelou to Michael Lerner to Quentin Crisp (even Bill Bennet was there, believe it or not), had two minutes to answer that question in a blitzkrieg of inspiration and perspective that left me staggering out of the theater in a state of marvelous neural overload.

But only two words have stayed with me. "Radical Amazement." I don't remember the context in which Communitarian thinker Amitai Etzioni used that phrase, but after years of trying to explain my faith to my more sensible friends, I finally had words for what distinguished me as a believer in the miraculous: Radical Amazement—at the magic in the world; at the transformative power of love; at the synergies that happen when people just say no to cowardly engagement with each other and somehow summon the crazy faith that you can love as you need to love, respect as you need to respect and commit as you need to commit without compromising who you really are.

As I sat between two of our youth at this event, I realized that YRUU, through disciplined principles of youth empowerment that distinguish it from any other youth movement I'm aware of, make the embrace of Radical Amazement possible with an integrity I needed as a teenager but didn't find until I found UUism.

Saying that no UU youth will have to choose between spiritual and intellectual integrity is a fine thing, but it is also an easy thing, and not enough. If we, the educated, sensible grownups, truly believed that our principles offered youth in need of a miracle the power of salvation, Unitarian Universalism would be growing at least as fast as Fundamentalism and the drug culture, and our churches would be even more vital places than they are.

I've asked many former YRUUers why they think so many of our youth leave Unitarian Universalism after high school. One thing I hear a lot is a sense of anticlimax in visiting UU churches as adults. I hear that in YRUU, one feels constantly surrounded by a kind of empowering love and acceptance that can make many places within the larger UU community seem almost barren by contrast.

There are many valid reasons for the diminished intensity of connection and meaning many former YRUUers experience in the post-adolescent UU community. Each period of life offers us special gifts for the process of connecting with the miraculous in each other through Unitarian Universalism, but adolescence is uniquely fertile ground. Maybe it's the alienation so many teenagers of this generation feel in relation to each other. Or the open-mindedness, and porous set of defenses adolescence seems to encourage.

The fact is, our unique UU principles, and the kinds of individuals drawn to our community, have generated the most potentially powerful religious institution I can imagine for empowering youth. There are more youth who have experienced transformation through liberal religion truthfully and powerfully shaping itself in YRUU than most adult UUs realize. And that's a shame.

And it goes both ways. Two years ago, I got a call from someone who told me he accidentally attended Youth Sunday, which he has always avoided, because he forgot to read the service announcement the week before. He said it was the only service at our church that moved him to tears. And he didn't know why. But he was surprised that this source of inspiration and power was part of his religious community.

I have been fed tremendously by the adults of our community and was a committed UU for years before I became a youth advisor. But like so many advisors, my commitment to YRUU is rooted in amazement at what our youth have taught me about the power of liberal religion. It has been our youth who have reminded me most consistently that in growing beyond the restraints of creed-based religion, I did not have to grow beyond living in the presence of the miraculous. And what I have learned by working with these people has enhanced my resources for relating to my peers.

But as an advocate for our youth, I advocate for a group of people marginalized from the centers of power in society at large and in our congregation. The sexton has told me several times that our youth clean up better than many adult groups in our church after events. Most of you didn't even know we had a 3-day 120-person youth conference here in October. And yet, whenever there's a minor problem, and, knock on wood, they've been minor problems this year, adults who hear about them seem to give them more attention than they would give comparable problems generated by adults. Even here in the land of Political Correctness, where we can be painfully conscious of language that marginalizes and offends other minorities, we routinely use language like "responsible adult" to underscore our distrust of a culture, youth culture, with traditions and orientations that often seem alienating and threatening to us grown ups, who, for better or worse, define the terms of power in our churches. As a multi-generational religious community, we Unitarian Universalists have come a long way since the re-birth of our youth movement 15 years ago. But we have a long way to go. A long way.

I encourage you to seize the opportunity our youth offer you to fulfill the promises of our UU principles. To acknowledge the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, including youth. To understand that ministering to youth requires reaching out to another culture, using a different set of tools than we use to minister to adults, and to value those tools as we value the others. Our youth will help you learn to tolerate and celebrate the differences between our adult culture and theirs, to engage them, and perhaps to be transformed by what you learn.

Just as rational integrity by itself can limit our experience of the miraculous, so our adult-centrism limits our experience of what youth can teach us about community and spirituality.

The next time you find yourself bristling at the inconveniences, expense and risks that youth ministry requires us to assume; the next time you find yourself reluctant to engage one of our possibly wild-haired and body-pierced youth in conversation or to accept him as a full member of our church community, I would gently challenge you with one of God's most sacred words. A word which birthed our Unitarian and Universalist traditions and which often finds its least compromised, most miraculous, and, yes, most crazy-making expression in adolescence. I offer you this morning the word, "Why?"

Appendix D: Reflections On The History Of LRY And The Transition To YRUU

An essay

by Rev. Wayne Arnason

As part of the research for this report, the Rev. Wayne Arnason was asked to reflect on his memories and personal role in the transition from LRY to YRUU during the period 1967-1982. The essay that follows is his response to that request.

When I look at the YRUU group in my own congregation, and talk with their advisors, it does not look or feel that much different from the LRY group I was a part of in Winnipeg from 1965-69. We did not follow a structured curriculum, although we occasionally did use structured resources for programs. We devised our own schedule of activities working with our advisors. We did some fund-raising, we attended regional conferences, and we planned an annual Youth Sunday Service. The relationship we had with our adult advisor was different than what we experienced with teachers or parents. It had a quality that gave us permission to explore a different kind of relationship with each other—a relationship that for me was more trusting and risk-taking than what I had with friends in high school. These relationships were intensified by our shared experiences of going to regional conferences, which were very exciting. Being in Western Canada, these trips often involved overnight train travel just to get there.

Being that we were generally 15-17 years old, the intimacy and interpersonal risk-taking that would happen in my group and at regional conferences in my “federation” was charged with sexual tension. Some people were sexually active and everyone who wasn’t desperately wanted to be, or at least fulfill their fantasy of what being sexually active meant. Alcohol was not a big factor in our local or regional meetings, and, even though we heard about the emerging youth culture through the media, my first couple of years in LRY in Western Canada didn’t reflect much of it. Rock’n roll had definitely reached us, but sex and drugs were minimal until 1968-69, when I was almost done with high school myself.

Taking the leap out of Western Canada in 1967 to attend Continental Conference in Oxford OH brought me into contact with the wider world of American and Canadian LRYers. Even though that year’s Continental Conference had a major controversy about conferees harvesting and smoking wild marijuana growing nearby, drug use tended to be limited to older youth from the two coasts, and a minority of them. However, often the folks who smoked dope or dropped acid were some of the best and brightest leaders among us. They also had the most insights and skills in dealing with adults.

Between 1967 and 1970, youth culture emerged all over the continent as a social phenomenon. Clothing and hair style were used to shock the adult population, serving to set this youth culture apart from the mainstream culture far beyond the usual inter-generational tensions. LRY, being made up in large part of the children of the monied cultural elite, was firmly grounded in the youth counter-culture. Likewise, the political ideologies of the time had a profound effect on LRY leadership. Agendas of empowerment—for blacks, for women—were what was happening. Why not for youth?

In 1969, following the lead of the Black Affairs Council which, the year before, had asked the UUA for “no strings attached” funds for their economic empowerment projects, LRY also asked to be free from UUA control over its funds. Since its birth in 1953, LRY’s budget had been created by an adult Executive Director who worked with the youth leadership in a way that already gave the youth considerable authority over how the money was spent. However, for the UUA leaders, it was this adult who was clearly the authority when they wanted to know who was in charge. When the Executive Director Richard Kossow resigned in 1969, while it was partially for personal reasons, it was also out of a conviction that this role was not one an adult should be playing. The LRY youth leadership asked that no new Executive Director be hired. I was part of the leadership group that made this request.

LRY had its own endowment, but the interest from it did not go specifically towards youth programming. It went into the UUA’s general budget that in turn funded the LRY budget, the largest part of which was the Executive Director’s salary. What we proposed to the UUA was that we could do better youth programming if the salary and endowment interest went directly to LRY. We had bright ideas and proposals. It was the last year of the last term of Dana Greeley as UUA President, and both Dana and Vice President Ray Hopkins had a really good relationship with Larry Ladd, the President of LRY. Because Larry was incredibly trustworthy and competent, I think Dana and Ray felt it would be okay to go in the direction we proposed, especially given that it would be hard to find a new Executive Director under the circumstances of Kossow’s resignation. I also don’t think they believed this would last. Large numbers of youth were preparing to attend the 1969 General Assembly to lobby for our proposal. Making a deal with us beforehand defused at least one volatile issue in what already promised to be an explosive GA due to the Black Affairs Council appealing the decision of the UUA Board to renege on the \$1 million the 1968 GA had promised them.

The LRY's request for control of its budget was granted. The outgoing UUA Administration agreed to work directly with the youth leadership and the new UUA President, Robert West, had to honor that agreement. For the next ten years the UUA had a denominational youth program with no adult director or advisor in charge or in a team relationship with youth leaders.

So what happened during those ten years? In brief, I would say that the adults of the UUA gradually despaired of effectively working with youth after they gave up formal power over them. What happened first at the continental level gradually happened at the district and local levels as well. Youth leadership in local groups said, "We don't need an advisor," and adults said, "Well, okay . . .," and walked away from it all until there was trouble.

Liberal Religious Youth continued to elect Executive Committees for ten more years composed of young people generally 17-19 years old. They oriented each other to their job and to the UUA, but they were not well integrated into the entire UUA staff. They knew very little about how to effectively run a program that is supposed to service the needs of youth groups and churches across the continent. They did not know how to manage a budget, and by 1975 the endowment was depleted by half due to an ideologically pure but financially unsound investment in Black Affairs Council bonds.

During this time there were clearly some stellar LRY Executive Committee members and there were some fine program materials that were produced. However, what was gradually lost was any meaningful connection or support between the continental level of LRY and the regional level and local congregations. The regional level almost dwindled away to nothing by 1975-76. Some of it was due to "sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll" as regional conferences occasionally self-destructed around behavior issues and local congregations resolved to no longer support or encourage their youth to attend them. Instead, LRY youth would invite their friends to come, such that sometimes federation conferences had more non-UU involved youth than those from UU families. Youth who ascended to regional and continental leadership roles did so out of their longevity as conference-goers rather than from experience in a local youth group. This was a great cause for concern among adult UUs.

This ten-year breach between the UU association of congregations and its continental youth organization has had tragic consequences for our denomination. During the 1970s, an entire generation of UU youth were lost to our religious movement when the existing youth organization was not supported and an alternative program was not provided in its place. These youth got the message that UUism was not interested in them and consequently they wandered away. It is particularly interesting to me to read the names of the LRY leaders involved at the continental level during the period 1973-1978. There is not one that I recognize as having a continuing relationship with Unitarian Universalist churches or leadership as an adult. Even those youth in leadership positions could not be retained for adult leadership in UUism. This is quite different from the number of current ministers and lay leaders with LRY experience previous to 1973, as well as different from the leadership we have gained since 1978.

In my opinion, the biggest problem for LRY during this period, and especially from 1973-76, was that it lost its institutional memory for how to sustain a strong service program to districts and churches. These few years were an eternity for youth leadership, but the blink of an eye for local church ministers. Congregational leaders came to see that, in spite of some quality programs on paper and the occasional articulate, well-organized youth leader, they were not getting much help for their local youth program from LRY. Consequently, lay and clerical leaders—on the other side of the cultural Great Divide from the youth in LRY—began regularly attacking the ineffectiveness of the program. A few adult advisors and ministers who were supportive of LRY would defend the program in spite of personal misgivings and minimal results. I was one of those.

Indeed, adult advisors were not totally absent from the program during this time. Many were wonderful people, committed to the UUA and to successful youth programs. Unfortunately, though, they were not always clear on the appropriate boundaries between their adult advisor roles and their friendships with the young people, aligning themselves more closely with youth culture than with the adult mainstream. Consequently, their endorsement did not help answer the question of what the appropriate relationship ought to be between a youth organization and a parent institution. Adult advisors to LRY often had an anti-establishment attitude themselves.

The section of "Follow The Gleam" that I wrote on the dissolution of LRY was written in 1979 and stands up pretty well today as a good description of what happened. By late 1975, a political process of evaluation and decision-making on youth programming, initiated at the request of LRY, was launched in the UUA with the appointment of the Special Committee On Youth Programs. In their November 1977 report, SCOYP recommended that resident youth staff be replaced by one adult staff person and a secretary. The UUA Board wanted to follow this recommendation and terminate the youth staff presence at the UUA. Two years of political maneuvering within the continental Youth Adult Committee and the UUA Board followed. A floor fight at the 1979 General Assembly resulted in a compromise that I brokered, and that the new UUA President Gene Pickett promised to endorse. The compromise was to leave the LRY Executive Committee in place while bringing on the new adult staff person, and to give that person a year to work out a new direction. I was hired to be that staff person.

In January of 1980, three weeks after I arrived in Boston and at my first UUA Board meeting in my new job, I had to negotiate furiously to retain any funding at all for the LRY Executive Committee in the upcoming year's budget. I presented a proposal to undertake a democratic re-structuring of the entire youth program from top to bottom based on representation of youth and adults

from the local and district levels up. It was a plan that the LRY Executive Committee and the LRY Board had to buy into and willingly accept, along with the UUA Board and Administration.

Ultimately, everyone did buy into the plan. By August 1980, when the LRY Board voted its support, all the major players had agreed to participate. Over the next year, a structure for sending delegates to a "constitutional convention" was created. The site was to be Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. The goal was for delegations to be district based with a 2:1 youth to adult ratio, so I traveled all over the country convincing districts to buy into the process. I recruited a wonderful staff for the conference, and we devised a title and theme: "Common Ground".

To this day, I believe that Common Ground was the best work I have ever done. It included everyone in an authentically democratic process which resulted in the LRY leadership agreeing to end LRY's existence to transform it into a new youth organization. We only got the job part way done at Carleton College, and came together again the next summer at Bowdoin College in Maine with both new and returning delegates for "Common Ground II". That was where the name Young Religious Unitarian Universalists was decided, and where the current YRUU structure was created.

There was no way that every person who had ever had an investment in LRY could be happy with the decision to surrender it. This is especially true for those who were not present in the process. In fact, it took great courage and insight for the LRY leaders of that time to see that the organization they loved had to die in order to survive for future generations of youth, and I believe that is exactly what has happened.

Appendix E: Code of Ethics for Persons Working with Children and Youth in UUA Sponsored Programs

1. The Role of Adult Leaders

Adults working with children and youth in the context of our Unitarian Universalist faith have a crucial and privileged role, one which may carry with it a great deal of power and influence. Whether acting as youth advisor, chaperone, child-care worker, teacher, minister, registrant at a youth-adult conference or in any other role, the adult has a special opportunity to interact with our young people in ways which are affirming and inspiring to the young people and to the adult. Adults can be mentors to, role models for, and trusted friends of children and youth. They can be teachers, counselors and ministers. To help our children grow up to be caring and responsible adults can be a meaningful and joyful experience for the adult and a lifetime benefit to the young person.

While it is important that adults be capable of maintaining meaningful friendships with the young people they work with, adults must exercise good judgment and mature wisdom in using their influence with children and youth and refrain from using young people to fulfill their own needs. Young people are in a vulnerable position when dealing with adults and may find it difficult to speak out about the inappropriate behavior of adults. Adult leaders need to possess a special dedication to working with our young people in ways which affirm the UUA Principles. Good communication skills, self-awareness and understanding of others, sensitivity, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and a positive attitude are all important attributes. Additionally, in recruiting adult leaders we should also seek persons who 1) have a social network outside of their religious education responsibility in which to meet their own needs for friendship, affirmation, and self-esteem, and 2) are willing and able to seek assistance from colleagues and religious professionals when they become aware of a situation requiring expert help or intervention.

It is ultimately the responsibility of the entire congregation or conference community, not just those in leadership positions, to create and maintain a climate which supports the growth and welfare of children and youth.

2. Code of Ethics

With the aforementioned in mind, the following statement is submitted as a "Code of Ethics" for adults working with children and youth:

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is therefore especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurturing, care, and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility. The relationship between young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential of their relationship is to be realized.

There are no more important areas of growth than those of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. Wisdom dictates that children, youth and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; leaders will therefore refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass youth nor engage in behavior with children or youth that constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.

Leaders shall be informed of the code of ethics and agree to it before assuming their roles. In cases of any violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

Appendix F: Curriculum Footnotes

(1) Out-of-print curricula may be available for loan from individual congregations or district libraries. A plan for making out-of-print curricula available on line is to begin with the senior high spirituality curriculum *On The Path*. The UUA could obtain and grant permission to copy out-of-print materials when a decision has been made not to re-publish, or could make copies available itself through the UUA Bookstore at cost. For example, *In Our Hands: A Peace and Social Justice Program*, is currently available for Adults, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-6, and Senior High, while the Junior High segment is out-of-print. Given that there are no materials that come with this curriculum other than those contained in a 100-page book, it could be kept in print with a copier.

Some Out-of-Print or Otherwise Unlisted Resources:

Carry the Flame, Lori Berger McDermott (First Religious Society, Carlisle, MA 1993). A “self-paced, developmentally appropriate, and interactive curriculum developed in three levels” based on the seven principles of the UUA, not described in either Curriculum Mapping or The UUA Bookstore Catalog.

A Growing Up Year, Margaret K. Gooding (1988 revision), 26 sessions, 1 hour.

In Our Hands: A Peace and Social Justice Program, Junior High, Barry Andrews, Robert C. Branch, Virginia Lane, Harold Rosen (1990), 13 sessions, 1 hour. Note that this resource is available for four other age groups, but the Junior High version is out-of-print.

Life Journey, Caroline Fenderson (1988). “A year-long religious education program for early adolescents from ages 12-15” which “engages its participants in exploring the human life journey through all of its ages and stages.”

(2) Publications and curricula available through the 1996-97 UUA Bookstore Catalog:

Youth Section: *Race to Justice*; *From YACs to SACs*; *The Local Youth Group Program Handbook*; *Playing with Fire: Creative Conflict Resolution for Young Adults*; *Talk with Teens About Feelings, Family, Relationships and the Future*; *Beyond Pink and Blue*; *Messages in Music*; *Religion in Life: Boys*; *Religion in Life: Girls*.

Youth curricula listed in other sections of the catalog: *About Sexual Abuse: Program for Teens and Young Adults*; *In Our Hands: A Peace and Social Justice Program, Senior High*; *Life Issues for Teens (LIFT)*; *On the Path: Spirituality for Youth and Adults*; *World Religions: A Year’s Curriculum for Junior Youth*, “Complete program no longer available. Leader guide for replacement copy only.”

(3) Junior High resources from Curriculum Mapping:

About Your Sexuality, Deryck Calderwood (1983), 20-35 sessions, 1-2 hours.

Beyond Pink and Blue: Exploring our Stereotypes of Sexuality and Gender, Tracey Robinson-Harris and Ritch C. Savin-Williams (1994), 12-18 sessions, 1-1.5 hours.

How Can I Know What to Believe?, Charlene Brotman and Barbara Marshman (Brotman-Marshfield, 1986, revision), 27 sessions, 1 hour.

How Others Worship, B. June Hutchinson (The UU Christian Fellowship, 1978) 21+ sessions, 1 hour, plus field trips.

Messages in Music: Unitarian Universalism for Junior High, Elizabeth May Strong (1993), 23 sessions, 1 to 1.25 hours

Race to Justice: A Racial Justice and Diversity Program for Junior High (1995), 15 sessions, 1 hour.

(4) Senior High resources from Curriculum Mapping:

About Sexual Abuse, Fred Ward and Betty Ward (1990), about 10 sessions, 1-1.5 hours (or weekend retreat).

In Our Hands: A Peace and Social Justice Program, Senior High (1990), 12 sessions, 1-1.25 hours.

Life Issues for Teens (LIFT), Wayne Arnason and Cheryl Markoff Powers (1985), 20 sessions, 2-2.5 hours (adaptable to more, shorter sessions).

On the Path, Wayne Arnason, Janet Harvey, David Levine, David Marshak, Makanah Morris, Christine Robinson, and Mara Lyn Schoeny (1989), 7-10 sessions, 2-3 hours, with longer events.

(5) Multi-Age resources from Curriculum Mapping:

Connecting with the Earth. Martha Nabatian (Canadian Unitarian Council, 1993), 4-8 sessions, 1-1.5 hours, and an intergenerational service. Canadian emphasis, materials for four groups: primary, junior, youth and adult.

We Believe: Learning and Living Our Unitarian Universalist Principles, Ann Fields and Joan Goodwin (1990), 22 sessions, 1 hour. "For children from 5 to 12, some parts accessible and interesting to preschool, junior-high, senior-high students and adults."

Worth and Dignity of All People, Marjorie Dunn (Paint Branch Unitarian Universalist Church, 1993), 5 sessions, 1-1.25 hours. Materials for four grade levels, including 7 & 8.

(6) Elementary curricula designed for middle school and adaptable to high school, described in Curriculum Mapping:

You the Creator, Richard S. Kimball (Green Timber Publications 1993), 37 sessions, 1 hour.

(7) Curriculum described in winter/spring 1997 REACH:

God Power, Mary Ann Moore (available from author), 15 sessions for 7th and 8th grades.