



**Central Midwest District  
Consultation on Youth Ministry  
Summary Report**

**April 14, 2007**

**Oak Park, IL**

**Facilitators: Sara Eskrich and Rev. Shana Lynngood**

## **The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth District Information**

**Full name of district:** Central Midwest District

**Date of district youth ministry gathering:** April 14, 2007

**Type of gathering:** District Assembly

**Length of gathering:** Two workshop slots

**Total number of participants:** 35

**Number of youth participants:** 4

**Number of adult participants:** 31

**Does your district have a Youth-Adult Committee/Youth Steering Committee/the equivalent?**

Yes, the District Youth Steering Committee (DYSC).

**What positions/roles does it include?** Moderator, Social Action Chair, Secretary, Newsletter, Suspender, Treasurer, Editor, YCR, 2 Adult Advisors, Committee Coordinator, District Youth Coordinator

**Is there a youth on your district's Board of Trustees?** Yes

**Do youth serve on any other district committees?** No - moving away from committees at the district level.

**Does your district have a youth coordinator/minister?** Yes - 1/2 time - 1/4 youth, 1/4 YA

**What other staff support, if any, exists for youth ministry in the district?** District staff are very supportive and connected.

**Does your district regularly offer trainings (Leadership Development, Spirituality Development, Youth Advisor, Anti-Racism Analysis Development, Chaplain, Renaissance Modules)? If yes, which one(s)? How often?**

5 periodically - have begun annual rotation of LDC and SDC. Have had chaplains (Meadville Lombard students) at cons for 9 years.

**Other exciting opportunities or initiatives in the district:**

Attached are two annual district reports from this last year. One is written by the youth moderator of DYSC and the other by the District Youth and Young Adult Coordinator.

Plans for next year include an Advisor Convocation in the fall which will be an opportunity for new advisors to get training and all advisors to share and be in community. We are also planning Groundwork AR/AO training with Young Adults in December or January. These are, in addition to two annual conferences, area youth events and perhaps a Bridger's conference.

-Kimberlee Tomczak

## The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Discussion of Youth Ministry Survey Data on Spirituality

### Data:

On all levels of youth ministry and across all ages and identities, a large percentage of respondents in the CMwD and overall report that their spiritual needs are not being met.

- ⊕ Congregation is my spiritual home: **53%** agree overall, **50%** CMwD
- ⊕ Youth group meets my spiritual needs: **53%** agree overall, **48%** CMwD
- ⊕ District programs meet my spiritual needs: **70%** agree overall, **63%** CMwD
- ⊕ Continental programs meet my spiritual needs: **63%** agree overall, **67%** CMwD

Open-Ended Survey Question: Describe your spiritual beliefs and how involvement in your UU congregation has helped shape those spiritual beliefs.

- ⊕ The responses to this question reflect a diverse UU youth community.
- ⊕ Older respondents were more likely to share a detailed description of their spiritual beliefs, while younger respondents were sometimes unsure.
- ⊕ Many respondents mentioned the influence and value of their congregation's Coming of Age program.

### Reflection Questions:

1. How can Unitarian Universalist youth ministry help youth to determine their spiritual needs, articulate their faith, feel spiritually fulfilled, and live out our faith in the world?
2. How do congregations and the district currently contribute to the spiritual development of youth?
3. How could congregations and the district contribute to the spiritual development of youth?

### Discussion of Spiritual Needs:

- Have very diverse groups – worry should we're currently trying to group all together, different groups have different aims, should offer different opportunities for all
- Need personal spiritual home
- All youth come from different places/experiences (e.g. not all are lifelong Unitarian Universalists) – how can they meet their own spiritual needs?
- Six components of a healthy youth group – youth ministry follows a praxis model, need to incorporate UU principles because values speak in actions
- Why are only some youth interested in spirituality?
- If youth aren't getting their spiritual needs met in church, then where?
- Time spent developing spirituality, as basis for social action
- Need to intentionally connect all realms
- Broaden definition of what spirituality is
- Youth are members of a community and communities work with different needs of its members, support each other in what their needs are even if not personally meaningful

## The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Identifying Needs and Changes

### Group 1

**Need/Change #1:** Intentional community building

<b>What will this change accomplish?</b> Stronger youth groups and stronger connections between youth and the larger community.	
<b>Next Steps</b> 1. Resource gathering and creation 2. Training 3. Implementation and review (continuing the cycle)	<b>Who</b> DYSC District Office/Youth Office ALL

**Need/Change #2:** Advisor support

<b>What will this change accomplish?</b> Healthier, sustainable youth groups and advisor retention.	
<b>Next Steps</b> 1. Advisor Training 2. Advisor Retreat 3. Teaching congregations to recruit, train, and support advisors	<b>Who</b> DYSC, CMwD DYSC DYSC, Local Congregations

### Group 2

**Need/Change #1:** Make church feel more like a spiritual home

<b>Next Steps</b> 1. Have activities that build community 2. DRE, RE Committee, and Minister make it a priority 3. Set a standard for spiritual involvement	<b>Who</b> Youth and Advisors Youth Leaders Program Leaders
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**Needs/Change #2:** Make youth a part of the whole congregation

<b>Next Steps</b> 1. Involve youth in worship services 2. Train adults to talk to youth, train in radical hospitality 3. Put articles in newsletter about what youth are	<b>Who</b> Minister DRE and Minister Youth Advisor
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doing	
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**Needs/Change #3:** Integrate adults and youth in church

<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have church-wide youth conference</li> <li>2. Adults invite youth to participate in their activities, committees, and programs</li> </ol>	<p><b>Who</b></p> <p>Youth Adults and Church Leaders</p>
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### Group 3

**Need/Change #1:** Support advisors – training, recognition, etc.

<p><b>What will this change accomplish?</b> Direct support will increase relationships within the congregation, provide more stable trained adults for teens.</p>	
<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Open house curriculum at church</li> <li>2. Advisors dinner, recognition on board, youth on board</li> <li>3. District advisor training, give money to pay</li> </ol>	<p><b>Who</b></p> <p>RE Curriculum Committee Minister  District Lifespan Coordinator, Youth Coordinator</p>

**Need/Change #2:** Challenge all congregational committees to work with youth annually on a project

<p><b>What will this change accomplish?</b> Increase youth exposure to all aspects of congregations. Give more adults an opportunity to work with teens.</p>	
<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ask committee to meet with youth, present to youth, committee fair for all (include youth)</li> <li>2. Ask youth to join committee</li> <li>3. Committees plan projects with youth</li> </ol>	<p><b>Who</b></p> <p>Program Council  Youth Advisors, Youth Groups Committee Chairs and Minister</p>

**Need/Change #3:** Covenant group style youth groups (10-15 people, freshmen/sophomores and juniors/seniors grouped)

## The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Youth Ministry

### Working Definition

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

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

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

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

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

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### Participant Feedback/Discussion:

- Who owns youth group/youth ministry? – covenant/responsibility
- Responsibility – membership
- Link between youth and the denomination, UUism
- Drop off gaps
- Is the point to create lifelong UUs? – valuable to create people who will live out the principles
- “Relationship based ministry” – what does this mean?
- What does “authentic”

## **The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Facilitator Evaluation**

There wasn't enough time for a complete evaluation process at the end. "Overall, I think the process was a good one for the district but much too short. They really seemed to need this forum for discussion." (Sara Eskrich)

The participants seemed interested in discussing in small groups, sharing struggles and questions, and focusing on specific issues.

## **The Consultation on Ministry To and With Youth Process Outline**

Two District Assembly workshop slots.

- Discussion of the youth ministry working definition (some confusion about the difference between youth ministry and youth empowerment; some discussion about boundaries and youth-adult relations)
- Facilitators review the Youth Ministry Buzz (results of the UU Youth Ministry Survey and Congregational Conversations)
- Discussion of the results, with a focus on the results on spiritual development and spiritual needs.
- Use survey results as basis for discussion of needs and next steps for the district

## Youth Annual Report 2006-2007 by Nat Steinsultz-Moderator

This year DYSC (District Youth Steering Committee) has seen a lot of new changes, new opportunities, and has had the chance to re-evaluate old policies and procedures. We have been working to make the youth program more beneficial on a local scale, as well as keeping us in sync with the district and national movements. We have also increased support for our beloved youth advisors. Overall, DYSC has done a lot to improve youth programming in the district, and has more promising opportunities on the horizon.

2006 saw a departure from our traditional schedule of 3 cons a year. (Fall-Winter-Spring) We decided to forego the winter con and instead leave room in the schedule for local areas to host smaller area cons and so DYSC could sponsor a Spirituality Development Conference (SDC). The conference was a big success despite the blizzard that appeared Friday morning. We had participants from a wide variety of churches across the district that spent the better part of the weekend learning and refining worshiping and spiritual practices to bring back to both the youth community and their congregations.

The past few years DYSC has reformed the structure of the AYC's (Area Youth Council) multiple times in an effort to make them more effective in serving the local youth. We have seen tremendous success with the current implementation in the Chicago AYC, but have not seen the same result in the Northern and Southern AYC's. Because of this, DYSC is no longer requiring an AYC for each area. We will instead be facilitating a visioning session at the next con with members of each area in order to determine what the area wants, what system best facilitates achieving those desires, and how DYSC can support the area in those efforts. This is the result of a discussion that lead us to realize that each district has different strengths and different needs.

Inspired largely by the youth advisors on DYSC, we have planned a youth advisor training session for next fall. It will be day long session aimed at advisors of high school aged youth groups in the district. It will contain training sessions to help them support their youth groups. It will be held on September 22 at Dupage UU Church.

We just started plans for an Anti-Racism /Anti-Oppression (AR/AO) conference in the district to be held next year for youth and young adults. Very little has been done in the youth sphere involving AR/AO work. We hope this will help make it a bigger part of youth programming in the future.

DYSC has also been working with the youth office on the youth consultation on ministry. We distributed surveys at con and talked to the youth about making sure they carried out the consultation process at their church. We are also talking with youth and advisors to get them to attend the district consultation.

The rest of DYSC's time is spent planning and overseeing cons. We make sure cons are fun safe and supportive places for youth. We have made updates to the con manual, which has been invaluable in demonstrating expectations and guidelines for the host church

Overall, DYSC has been moving forward in a lot of ways. We have a lot of opportunities we didn't have before. We've made a lot of progress, but the future holds even more promise for the youth in our district.

## ☪ CMWD Young Adult and Youth Coordinator-Annual Report 2007

This half time position has four main responsibilities:

- Support and be a resource for YASC (Young Adult Steering Committee) formerly Young Adults Planning Stuff (YAPS)
- Support and be a resource for District Youth Steering Committee (DYSC)
- Bridging - to make the transitions from high school to young adult and beyond meaningful in the context of the district's UU congregations.
- Campus Ministry - working with UU college students to help them stay connected to UUism and to open the door to new UUs on campus.
- To facilitate connections and create opportunities at the district and continental level for CMWD young adults (18-35) and high school aged youth.

The District Youth and Young Adult continue to grow and change each year. In this report I will take you through the calendar year of events and growth starting from March of 2006, the date of my last report.

On March 31-April 1, YASC hosted a young adult conference in Chicago, called ConArtist; approximately 50 Young Adults (ages 18-35) from across the district came to together to worship, learn and socialize. At that conference young adults enjoyed being in a large group of their peers, a coffeehouse, a food drive, clothes exchange, YASC elections and a variety of workshops including: Beating Poetry, Yoga, Spiritual Journaling, Drumming, Visual Literacy, Historical Tour of the Church, Making Surrealistic Collages and more. Special thanks to the seminary students of Meadville-Lombard who taught many of our workshops and to Scott Michael Edward for helping coordinate logistics, we truly enjoyed the historic church that generously hosted us. Overall the conference was a success and all conference profits were also put toward scholarships for young adults to attend continental YA events: OPUS, CONCENTRIC, and GA. YASC held a steering committee meeting Sunday morning, after the conference, to confirm plans for the upcoming district annual assembly and Radius Conference.

Early in March DYSC had our spring meeting at North Shore Unitarian Congregation in Deerfield, IL. We meet with the host church of the upcoming youth conference, to discuss plans and logistics. Our Spring Youth Conference was then held in March 2006 hosted by the North Shore Unitarian Congregation in Deerfield, IL. The spring conference had approximately 250 attendees, including 8<sup>th</sup> graders, youth, advisors and our bridging seniors. There was a variety of workshops and performances held, including DYSC elections and a Bridging Ceremony for our high school seniors. A workshop presented by DYSC and myself, explaining district organization, roles and responsibilities of district youth leadership was required for any one running for DYSC positions. We welcomed our newly elected members: Misha Davydov as Suspender, Meredith Lukow as treasurer, LinZ Simon as Social Action Coordinator, Maggie Boylan as Youth Council Rep. and Rebecca Poulos as Newsletter Editor. The bridging ceremony was planned by DYSC, each senior, spoke of their memories and gave farewells to the youth community, and then crossed over given a bridging candle as a gift and then joined the young adults that came to welcome them into their new community.

In April, I hosted the annual Regional Organizing Consultant and District Staff meeting in Racine, Wisconsin. This is a professional meeting lead by the YACM office to help set goals and meet with peers to understand the work being done across the country for the young adult movement.

District Annual Assembly in Madison last year had a strong young adult presence. YASC (Young Adult Steering Committee) hosted two workshops, one on Young Adult and Campus Ministry, another on the Church of the Younger Fellowship, I also helped coordinated a workshop on Anti-

Racism/Anti-Oppression sponsored by the YACM UUA office. YASC also sponsored an information booth where we sold our Young Adult made UU items; all profits go into our scholarship fund to help young adults attend continental conferences. First Unitarian provided activities on Saturday night for all DAA attendees, including a concert by Ellis, a UU musician from the Twin Cities. Special thanks goes to generosity of First Unitarian Society, who hosted the young adults at no cost, to YASC, that provided food, and to DAA Planning Committee, who reduced our registration and made a space for the community to financially support YA presence through scholarships on the registration form. With all this help we made the event financially accessible to all young adult in CMWD. A big thank you to Stacy Harbaugh for organizing the hospitality at First Unitarian and the concert!

This July, DYSC (District Youth Steering Committee) members met together in Park Forest, IL at Unitarian Universalist Community Church for our transition meeting between the outgoing committee members and the newly elected members. Some of the business at that meeting included: reviewing roles & responsibilities, edited our CMWD Youth Con Manual, sharing resources, budget, discussing the upcoming district youth consultation, reviewing and approving host church applicants for fall and winter youth conferences and preparations for a Spiritual Development Conference organized and funded for youth by DYSC. The decision was made to move have two district youth conferences a year, fall and spring and a winter training, and encourage AYC to have area youth conferences in the winter months. I prepared for this meeting by creating a CD of youth resources and helping the moderator plan the agenda.

Also in July, I facilitated the first ever Radius Central Conference, this conference brought together 75 young adults from Heartland, Prairie Star and CMW districts to intentionally connect our local and district young adult and campus groups on a regional level. The workshop programming was diverse, some of the workshop offered were: Creating Great Worship by Scott Prinster, Social Justice-Grassroots Organizing by Wendy Cooper, The YA Resources by Marcus Cooley, and Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racism-Racial Wealth Divide led by Jane Hereth. One of the goals of this event was to empower our region to send resolutions to Concentric, the YA annual business meeting, so we gathered as a large group to discuss and caucus. This resulted in the writing of a resolution to focus on making Connect UU, our YA database and registration website, more accessible and easier to use. The resolution was passed at Concentric in August and Connect UU is currently being repaired. Radius was filled with dialogues of many YA leaders, were enjoyed having the opportunity to share our experiences, worship together and singing around the fire pit at UU Rockford Congregation. Thanks to UU Rockford for hosting us, our deans: Jonathan Craig and Kelly Rauch, our workshops presenters, YACM UUA office for funding our event and all the attendees who traveled across the Midwest so we could be together.

Due to YASC scholarship fundraising, many young adults from CMWD were able to attend OPUS and Concentric; the YA continental conferences that give young adults an opportunity for spiritual connections and leadership training. From the applications, scholarship money was given to Matt Myer, Raegan Bricks, Myke Cowen Nissen, Sarah Jones, and Dan Maitland all have continued to use their skills on behalf of Young Adults throughout CMWD. I also presented workshops on district organizing, facilitated meetings, gave a report of Central Radius and took part in our continental Young adult business meeting. Also in August, we were thrilled to unveil our new District Young Adult Website, that was funded by a grant we received from the YACM UUA office. I spent a lot of time working with Revolution Media on the design and the content of the site, an ongoing project. Our young adult website can now be accessed and updated by district staff and steering committee members and has many special features of a content management system including; a calendar, YA resources and links, a photo gallery of our events, and YASC forum. YASC feels that this new vibrant site helps connect us, to the many youth adult that are embracing online faith communities. For current information about young

adult and youth activities, please visit the youth and young adult page on the district's web site: [cmwd-uaa.org](http://cmwd-uaa.org).

This fall I also spent time arranging a meeting for our district young adult steering committee (YASC), in Urbana, IL at the Channing Murray Center . This year, many changes were made in the organization membership of our committee and during this meeting we once again created a new structure for our steering committee including discussing quorum, job duties, and conference staff.. We set goals to have a variety of events throughout the year.

Many youth and young adult district events happened this fall and winter. In October, our Fall Youth Conference was in Springfield, IL at Abraham Lincoln Congregation. This conference had 220 attendees, and was the best youth conference I have ever attended. The host congregation did a magnificent job in creating strong worships, touch groups and a powerful social justice event that including a youth lead peace protest at the capital. DYSC assisted at both youth conferences this year by doing workshops on introducing and presenting the rules, being on disciplinary committee, doing night patrol and meeting with the AYC, Area Youth Committees. Also in October I went through an OWL training, in preparation for our YA fall conference.

In November we had our fall young adult conference, ConSensual, held at the UU Church of Urbana, IL. Where young adults enjoyed sharing worships lead by Meredith Olsen, Myke Cowen Nissan , and Erik David Carlson, who lead us in a Love Feast worship. We also had a costume party and dance, YASC elections and a variety of workshops including: Sacred Sensuality by Kacey Carlson, Sensual Poetry by Heidi McCormack, Sexuality & Pregnancy by Atena Danner-McPhaden, Sexual Orientation YA OWL Workshop by Erik Carlson and me. I also lead a viewing and discussion of the movies The Education of Shelby Knox and Tying the Knot . Our special guests the Missouri Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice lead us as a large group in an activity that explored how to advocate for reproductive justice, share your spiritual beliefs on sexuality and reproductive rights with others, and how to discuss timely and weighty issues using compelling talking points, innovative techniques, and a network of supporters. Throughout the event we explored many aspects of the Sensual including social justice issues, personal boundaries and privileges; the event was thought provoking, educational and fun!

In December, a Spiritual Development Conference for youth was held in Palantine, IL. Spirituality Development Conferences offer an opportunity for the youth and advisors to work together on ways to design effective, creative & meaningful worship services; ways to integrate spirituality more deeply into youth programming and the lives of the participants. I facilitated this event and Heather Godbout, a DYSC advisor was our local coordinator, Braeden Lentz and Jessica York were our trainers. The highlight of this conference was experiencing and critiquing the worships each small group planned, 9 in total, throughout the weekend.

This January both DYSC and YASC had meeting. Our youth steering committee met in Wheaton, IL at the UU Church. We discussed the plans for the next conference in St. Louis, planned our bridging ceremony and elections.

YASC meeting in January we had a visioning session lead by Justin Urbikas and I , and planned for our next conference, Continuum and District Annual Assembly.

In conclusion, throughout the year as an ex-officio member of YASC and DYSC, I provide staff support for budgeting, disbursements, committee meetings and events, governance, policies, maintain youth and young adult websites and multiple listservs. I also answer the phone calls, e-mails, and meet with UU congregations and members about youth and young adult issues.

Thanks to all the youth, young adults, their allies and congregations for their guidance and support of CMWD and the UUA, you continue to amaze me!

Blessings,

Kimberlee A. Tomczak